

RUMINATIONS

ON THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE
ROMANS

ALFRED E. WENHAM.

**THE KING'S INSTITUTE
THE CHURCH ON THE WAY**

28. 10. 31.

John Marshall

B.C.

BS 2665 .W464 1925

Wenham, Alfred E.

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ON

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

TO THE

ROMANS.

FOURTH EDITION.

BY

ALFRED E. WENHAM.

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PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY
THE HULBERT PUBLISHING CO., LTD.,
GLASGOW AND BIRMINGHAM.

1925.

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2665
W464
1925

PREFACE.

The difference between man's thoughts and God's thoughts, between man's ways and God's ways, is very apparent when the circumstances under which, and the purposes for which, the epistle to the Romans was written, are duly considered.

At the time St. Paul wrote his epistle, the city of Rome was the metropolis of the world, and the rule of Rome extended, if not over the whole of the habitable earth, yet over the greater part of the eastern hemisphere. Rome was the *world power* of its day.

Rome's territorial conquests were by this time complete, or practically so, as Britain, the last of them, was finally subdued in A.D. 78, when Agricola brought his campaign to its successful close; but Rome's power and influence in, and over, the world, continued to grow for at least another hundred years. It then reached the zenith of its prosperity and power, the empire at that time comprehending, according to Gibbon the historian, 'the fairest portion of the earth's surface, and the greater portion of its civilized inhabitants.'

It was the divine purpose to destroy this, the last of the four great world powers, and to vest *world power* in Him who is the One chosen of God to rule over the whole earth and in all hearts.

And it was the truths revealed, and brought to light, by the epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, which were the means ordained of God to prepare the way of his Coming, to reign in Zion.

Before proceeding to a detailed consideration of the epistle, and with a view to enabling the reader to take a wide and comprehensive view of the whole subject, the following historic facts relating to the city and empire of Rome, are here, by way of preface, set down in their due order.

The reign of the first Emperor of Rome, Augustus Cæsar, commenced B.C. 27, and lasted till A.D. 14, or 41 years in all. And

it was not only a long reign, but a marvellously prosperous one, the period being distinguished in history as '*the golden age of Rome.*' Great advances were made, during this period, in material prosperity, it being a saying of Augustus Cæsar, that when he took to his capital, it was made of brick; when he left it, it was made of marble.

On his deathbed, he is said to have counselled his successors to seek for no further territorial aggrandisement, but to be content for the empire to be confined within the boundaries provided for it by Nature, viz., the Rhine and the Danube on the north, the deserts of Africa and Arabia on the south, the river Euphrates on the east, and the Atlantic Ocean on the west. And to these wise counsels, speaking after the manner of men, is to be attributed the maintainance for so long a time, and the subsequent growth, of this vast empire.

Some idea of its extent may be gathered from the fact, that at the commencement of the Christian era, the city of Rome is said to have been fifty miles in circumference, and that the census taken by Augustus Cæsar at the time Christ was born, showed the number of its citizens to have been over four millions.

The rapid growth of the empire is seen by the result of another census, taken A.D. 48 by Claudius Cæsar, when the number accounted for had, according to Gibbon, increased to 6,945,000 citizens, apart from women and children, including whom the number could not have been less than twenty millions. Gibbon estimates further that as there were as many provincials as there were citizens, and as the number of slaves was at least as great as that of the free inhabitants, a hundred and twenty millions of the human race were, in A.D. 48, under the sway of Rome.

The actual population of the City of Rome, Gibbon estimates at between one and two millions, and that, of these, one-twentieth possibly were Christians.

The inhabitants of Rome were drawn from all parts of the Roman world; and from this cosmopolitan centre there was a continual migration into other countries where the Roman arms had triumphed and Roman colonies been established; these colonies, although politically parts of the empire, having been created as the result of its military power, were afterwards

governed by Consuls of their own, the colonists being reckoned, however Roman citizens, and as such entitled to the same political privileges as those who lived in Rome itself. This system, like a rope made of many strands, whilst giving great elasticity, gave also great tenacity, to the Empire, and at the same time made it possible for Roman law to prevail over the whole area.

Probably human government has never achieved such material success as in the palmy days of Pagan Rome. But, although Rome controlled the actions, it did not control the affections, of those under its sway. Rome's god was '*the god of forces.*'¹ Rome ruled '*with force and with cruelty.*'²

It may be said, and with some appearance of reason, that God himself had up to that time, and indeed more or less ever since, has governed the world by *force*; and that even in his dealings with his chosen people Israel, whilst there were foreshadowings of something better, yet *the Law*, under which they were, had nothing but death and destruction to offer to those who, in even the smallest particular, transgressed the divine commandment.

It is true God revealed himself to Israel, by his acts, as a God of infinite Mercy, a God '*whose mercy endureth for ever,*' but He also, by his acts, showed himself to be a God of infinite Justice, a God who '*will by no means clear the guilty.*'³ But how and in what way these two apparently contradictory attributes of Justice and Mercy, are reconcilable, how and in what way sin can so be '*put away*'⁴ and perfect holiness brought in, as to enable man to '*appear without fault before the throne of God,*'⁵ was as yet a mystery, an apparent impossibility; as indeed it still is, except to those taught of the Holy Ghost, and enabled by faith to believe '*things not seen.*'⁶

In the events which transpired during the reign of the first five Cæsars, and of which a chronological summary is here given, there is to be seen the buddings of the great contest which is to eventuate, in the triumph of Christ, '*the Prince of Peace,*'⁷ the final overthrow of Satan, '*the prince of this world,*'⁸ and a full revelation of God's way of salvation, that is to say, of how, and in what way, God's eternal purposes of love, are to, and will be, fulfilled.

¹ Dan. xi. 38.² Ezek. xxxiv. 4. ³ Ex. xxxiv. 7.⁴ Heb. ix. 26.⁵ Rev. xiv. 5.⁶ Heb. xi. 1.⁷ Isaiah ix. 6.⁸ John xiv. 30.

AUGUSTUS CÆSAR—B.C. 27 TO A.D. 14.

- B.C. 5 John the Baptist born.
 4 Christ born, in the days of Herod the king.
 3 Herod the Great, the first king of that name, died.
 A.D. 8 Jesus found in the temple, sitting in the midst of the
 Doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

TIBERIUS CÆSAR—A.D. 14 TO A.D. 36.

- A.D. 25 Pilate was appointed Governor of Judæa.
 26 John the Baptist began to '*preach in the wilderness.*'
 27 Christ was '*baptized of John.*'
 31 Jesus began to preach, '*the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*'
 32 John the Baptist was beheaded by Herod, Tetrarch of Galilee.
 33 Christ was crucified. Died, was buried, and rose again. The Outpouring of the Spirit took place, and the Dispensation of the Holy Ghost commenced.
 Stephen was stoned to death.
 35 Saul was converted.

CALIGULA—A.D. 36 TO 41.

- A.D. 36 Herod Agrippa I. was made King of Galilee.
 Cornelius, the Roman Centurion, was converted.

CLAUDIUS CÆSAR—A.D. 41 TO 54.

- A.D. 41 Herod Agrippa I. was made King of Palestine.
 43 The Disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.
 44 James, the brother of John, was put to death by Herod. Herod died, being smitten by the angel of the Lord.
 45 Barnabas and Saul were sent forth of the Holy Ghost.
 49 Circumcision and keeping of the Law were declared by the Apostles and Elders, not to be needful.
 Agrippa II., second son of Agrippa, was made King of Palestine.
 53 Paul a second time, with Silas, goes forth to visit and plant churches.

NERO—A.D. 54 TO 68.

- A.D. 56 Paul goes forth a third time, to visit and establish churches, but at Jerusalem, was attacked by an angry mob, out of whose hands, however, he was rescued by Roman soldiers. Subsequently, rather than go to Jerusalem to be judged, he appeals to Cæsar.
- 60 Paul's Epistle to the Romans was written whilst sojourning at Ephesus A.D. 59, and was conveyed to Rome by Phebe, a resident at Cenchrea, the eastern quarter of Corinth.
- Paul was taken the same year under military escort to Cæsarea, *en route* for Rome, and there brought before Felix, by whom he was kept there for two years.
- 62 Festus having succeeded Felix, as Procurator of Judæa, Paul was brought before him, and subsequently before King Agrippa II., when it was decided that, as he had appealed to Cæsar, unto Cæsar he should go.
- 63 After being shipwrecked at Melita, Paul arrives in Rome.
- 64 A great fire in Rome destroyed nearly half the city. This was followed by a persecution of the Christians in Rome, which went on for four years; St. Paul, and it is believed St. Peter also, being amongst those put to death.
- 68 During this year the Emperor Nero died by his own hand.

It would be foreign to the purpose of this preface, to dwell upon the historical events which transpired subsequently to the writing of the epistle to the Romans, except in so far as they were directly brought about by what Paul taught and preached; but the following historical facts, which followed the preaching of the gospel by Paul, seem to be appropriate as bearing upon the subject under consideration.

The epistle was written in or about the year A.D. 60, three or four years, that is to say, before Paul himself, in God's providence, found himself in the capital city of the Empire.

Under Roman law it was a criminal offence to introduce, at least into the Empire proper, any new religion, or for those under its sway to engage in any religious rites or ceremonies other than

those of the Pagan religion, or, as in these days it would be called, the national church. But although the fact must have been known, that certain persons, Jews and Gentiles, were, in increasing numbers, assembling themselves together, to worship a God unknown, or at least unacknowledged in the Pagan world, yet, probably for political reasons and because they were as yet comparatively few in number and of the so-called lower orders, little notice had so far been taken of this, nevertheless, fast increasing sect.

And even when Paul was brought to Rome, for the express purpose of being tried on a charge of teaching, preaching, and practising, the Christian religion, he was suffered, whilst awaiting trial, to dwell '*two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.*'¹ And, when at length brought to trial, he was, as it is believed, acquitted of the charge at that time laid against him. All which goes to prove, that up to the year A.D. 64, whether for political or other reasons, Christians in Rome, however much they may have been despised and hated, were, to a large extent, left unmolested and uninterfered with.

But this state of things did not last long, a change taking place as the result of a great fire in Rome, which was not got under for nine days, and which it is said destroyed half the city. In the words of Gibbon, the historian, 'the monuments of Greek art, and of Roman virtue, the trophies of the Punic and Gallic wars, the most holy temples, and the most splendid palaces, were involved in one common destruction. Of the fourteen quarters into which Rome was divided, four only remained intact. Three were levelled to the ground, and the remaining seven displayed 'a melancholy prospect of ruin and desolation.'

It was the popular belief that this was an incendiary fire, the work of the Emperor Nero himself. Foxe, in his Book of Martyrs, going so far as to state as a matter of fact that the city was set on fire by the officers, guards, and servants of Nero, and by his express order. And that whilst Rome was burning, he went up to the tower of Moecenas, where a full view of the

¹ Acts xxviii. 30, 31.

catastrophe could be obtained, played upon his harp, sang the song of the burning of Troy, and declared that he desired to see the ruin of all things before he died.

It would appear, however, that subsequently, fearing the popular fury, and with a view to diverting suspicion from himself, Nero charged this incendiary crime against the Christians; and that this charge being promulgated throughout the Empire, it was put forward as the ground for a decree to destroy the Christian sect, wherever found, together with all its adherents.

This, the first out of the ten persecutions, records of which are extant, was carried on for four years, under the auspices of the Emperor Nero; St. Paul, and it is believed St. Peter also, being amongst those who were delivered to death at this time. St. Paul, it is said, was beheaded, and St. Peter crucified, with at his own request his head downward, and both on the same day, the 29th June, A.D. 67.

The following account is taken from the writings of the Pagan historian Tacitus. He says, writing probably within 35 years of the event, that with the view of giving expression to his horror of the crime, and at the same time of vindicating himself, Nero proceeded to inflict the most exquisite tortures he could devise on the members of the Christian congregations, and that as the result, this dire 'superstition,' as Tacitus calls it, was completely checked, although, as he says, later on it again burst forth, and spread itself not only over Judæa, whence it originally came, but found its way again into Rome itself. Tacitus going on to give it as his opinion that the punishment inflicted on the Christians, were not so much on account of their being the authors of the great fire, as that they were enemies of the human race. According to this Pagan writer, they therefore justly died in torments, amidst the insults and derision of the whole people. Some, he says, were nailed on crosses, others sewn up in the skins of wild beasts and exposed to the fury of dogs; others, after being smeared over with combustible matter, were made use of as torches, to illuminate the darkness of the night.

The gardens of Nero, he says, were devoted to the enactment of these horrible scenes, a horse race being arranged as an accompaniment to the sport, the Emperor himself mingling with the crowd, in the dress and attitude of a charioteer.

The Christians, he goes on to say, deserved indeed exemplary punishment, but the public abhorrence of their guilt took at length the direction rather of pity and commiseration, more especially when it came to be recognised, that these unhappy Christians were after all being sacrificed in order to satisfy the cruelty of a jealous tyrant, rather than for the promotion of the public welfare.

In A.D. 68, upon the death of Nero, this first persecution came for the time being to an end, or at least was greatly abated. Nero died by his own hand, and was succeeded by his son Vespasian.

It was two years after this, in the year 70, that, the cup of the Jewish nation being now full, their end at length came, the power of Rome being made use of, by the Almighty, to execute the fierceness of his wrath on the people who had rejected, cast out, and killed, the King's Son, and had thought, by crossing swords with the great world power of Rome, to seize on his inheritance.

The blood of these wicked men was upon their own heads, and the judgment they had themselves pronounced a just one, was now executed by those they had dared to defy, the word they had themselves spoken being thereby fulfilled, viz., '*He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.*'¹

The privileged position in the world of the Jewish nation, as the custodians of God's word and the depositories of his truth, was now taken from them, and given to the Gentiles.

Jerusalem was, in the year 70, besieged and taken by Titus, son of the Emperor Vespasian, and whom he eventually succeeded.

The siege which lasted for six months, entailed upon the inhabitants of the city the most awful suffering. They were decimated by plague, pestilence, and famine; the word of the Lord spoken by Moses, and recorded in the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy, being at that time literally fulfilled, for, as was then foretold, they were reduced so low as to '*eat the fruit of their own bodies, the flesh of their sons and of their daughters.*' And when at length the city was taken, its inhabitants were massacred wholesale by the Roman legions, the number of Jews who from first to last were at this time cut off being upwards of a

¹ Matt. xxi. 41.

million, besides those carried away captive, who are said to have numbered ninety-seven thousand.

From the time of the call of Abraham, till now, it had been in and through the Jewish nation, that God had carried on in the world, the great contest between good and evil. Now the Jews are set aside, for the times of the Gentiles had come.

It was God's declared purpose, from the time of Adam's transgression, that the serpent's head should be bruised by the seed of the woman, but this his purpose was to be carried out, by Himself, and in his own way; not by man, nor in man's way. So far God had in his wisdom suffered, both the men of this world, and his chosen people Israel, to follow their own '*pernicious ways*';¹ '*the times of this ignorance God winked at*.'² But this was to be so no longer. The kings of this world had long ruled in the name of the '*god of forces*,'³ by the power of the will, of the sword, and of the intellect. With what result is shown, by the description given by the apostle Paul in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans of what the men of this world were, as represented by Rome, in their palmiest days. God was now about to rule by the power of The Word. '*Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts*.'⁴

Those among men employed to carry out this purpose of God, were not at the first, nor ever have been since, the so-called great men of this world, those, that is to say, endowed with great natural powers, whether of mind, body, or estate; or if and when such have been so employed, they have had, like Aaron, to '*put off their garments*,'⁵ and, like Joshua the high priest, to be '*clothed with change of raiment*,'⁶ before being employed in this service. '*God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are*.'⁷

Thus St. Paul, before being called to the office of an apostle, had to be reduced, or, so to speak, degraded, to the low place of a *servant*, and had to suffer a total loss of those '*things which were gain to him*,'⁸ that is to say, he had to jettison, to throw overboard, '*counting as dung*.'⁹ his natural powers, his

¹ 2 Peter ii. 2.

² Acts xvii. 30.

³ Dan. xi. 38.

⁴ Zech. iv. 6.

⁵ Levit. vi. 11.

⁶ Zech. iii. 4.

⁷ 1 Cor. i. 27, 28.

⁸ Phil. iii. 7.

⁹ Phil. iii. 8.

learning, eloquence, and force of character, and to, so to speak, resign his activities instead, to '*the foolishness of preaching.*'¹

Man was made in the image of God, '*after our likeness,*'² as it is said, and was ordained to have dominion over the works of God's hands, that is to say, over all created things. His fall through sin was great, and the divine purposes concerning him were seemingly thereby frustrated; but this could not be, and Man had therefore to be restored and raised up, not merely to what he was in Adam, for he would then sooner or later have fallen again, but to what, in his eternal purposes, God had from all Eternity designed Man to be, in order to the fulfilment of his destiny.

Man might have been left '*in his low estate*'³ to reap that which he had sowed, but this would have been as much a breach of the divine attribute of Mercy, as to '*clear the guilty*'⁴ would be a breach of the divine attribute of Justice. God's '*mercy endureth for ever,*'⁵ but so does God's justice. And unless and until this, with man, impossible state of things could be fully and perfectly met, the promised '*restitution of all things*'⁶ could not take place.

In his epistle to the Romans, the Apostle shows how this apparently insoluble problem has been solved, and a way whereby all men may be saved has been made possible, without sacrifice to either the Infinite Justice, or the Infinite Mercy, of '*the Holy One.*'⁷

He begins by setting forth, in the first chapter, the deplorable condition of the Gentiles, those endowed only with the so-called Light of Nature (for as all the brute creation is enlightened by the divinely bestowed gift of Instinct, so no man is without some measure of light, all men being endowed with Conscience, that light '*which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,*')⁸ and hence their need of Salvation. Had these followed the light given them, it would, however slowly and gradually, have led them onward and upward, but since, despising this '*day of small things,*'⁹ '*when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful,*' but '*changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things,*'¹⁰ this Light was withdrawn, with the awful results which the apostle goes on to describe.

¹ 1 Cor. i. 21.

² Gen. i. 26.

³ Ps cxxxvi. 23

⁴ Ex. xxxiv. 7.

⁵ Ps: cxxxvi. 1.

⁶ Acts iii. 21.

⁷ Job vi. 10.

⁸ John i. 9.

⁹ Zech. iv. 10.

¹⁰ Rom. i. 21—23.

In the second chapter he goes on to show the condition of the Jews, of those having the Light of Revelation. That their condition is practically no better than that of the Gentiles, and hence that they stand in need of Salvation as much as do the Gentiles. The Jew, it is true, makes an outward show which the Gentile does not, but inwardly there is nothing to choose between the two.

It may be said, what then is the good of Revelation? What advantage or profit hath it? This objection is met by its being pointed out, in the third chapter, that the revelation of truth, whilst proclaiming that there is '*none righteous, no not one*,'¹ that all, both Jew and Gentile, are '*under sin*,'² and that '*by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight*,'³ yet proclaims also that '*the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ is unto all and upon all them that believe*.'⁴ That is to say that whilst sin cannot be '*put away*'⁵ by works, by doing, it can be put away by faith, by believing. And since all that is necessary to restore man to a condition in which he may yet fulfil his destiny, is the putting away of sin, the purpose of God, frustrated for the time being by the death THROUGH sin of man's progenitor, the first Adam, and of those born of him, is to be fulfilled, after all, by the death FOR sin of the second Adam, the only begotten Son of God.

In the fourth chapter the apostle digresses, to meet a difficulty arising out of his contention, that *by the deeds of the law*, that is to say by anything he can *do*, no man, be he Jew or Gentile, can present himself before God as righteous, or can obtain that '*holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord*,'⁶ showing by a closely reasoned argument that even in the case of Abraham, the father of Israel and '*the Friend of God*,'⁷ it was not what he did, or what he was, but what he believed, it was the righteousness of Christ, in whom he believed, which was '*counted for righteousness*'⁸ unto him (Abraham).

And this declaration by St. Paul is confirmed by what our Lord himself said, '*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad*.'⁹

And the saying that the righteousness of Christ was thus '*imputed to Abraham for righteousness, was not written for his*

¹ Rom. iii. 10.

² Rom. iii. 9.

³ Rom. iii. 20.

⁴ Rom. iii. 22.

⁵ Heb. ix. 26.

⁶ Heb. xii. 14.

⁷ James ii. 23.

⁸ Rom. iv. 3.

⁹ John viii. 56.

sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.' ¹

The divine purpose that Man should have *dominion*, was, in the first instance, revealed as being limited to dominion over '*every living thing that moveth upon the earth*,' ² although later, as including dominion over '*all things*,' ³ whether on earth or in heaven.

In the first four chapters of the epistle it is shown how, although this position of high privilege was forfeited to his seed, '*the seed of the serpent*,' by Adam's sin, it is restored, by the righteousness of Christ, to his seed, '*the seed of the woman*,' that is to say to all those born of the Holy Ghost, and by faith united to, and made one with, Christ. In the fifth chapter some glimpses are given, of what the blessedness of those is, who are thus made one with Christ.

But in the sixth, seventh, and eighth chapters, it is shown, that those who are in Christ, although born into a new world, have to wait for '*the adoption, to wit the redemption of the body*.' ⁴ That as '*the Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool*,' ⁵ so those who are '*in Christ*,' ⁶ are bidden to be '*patient unto the coming of the Lord*.' ⁷ For although born from above, they have not yet entered into glory. Eventually they will be sharers of his glory, but meanwhile must be '*partakers of his sufferings*,' ⁸ for '*we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*.' ⁹

It is also shown that for those '*in Christ*,' ⁶ temptations will meanwhile abound; for although not of the world, they are still *in* the world, and, so long as this is so, they will be in continual danger, through the allurements of the world, the lusts and impurities of the flesh, and the snares and fiery darts of the devil. These manifold temptations being, however, fruitful of blessing, made as they are to work for good, and well calculated as they are to teach, more and more perfectly, the great lesson, that '*as we have received Christ Jesus, so we must walk in Him*.' ¹⁰ That is to say, that those saved by faith, must also live by faith.

¹ Rom. iv. 24. ² Gen. i. 28. ³ Heb. ii. 8; Ps. viii. 6; 1 Cor. xv. 27.

⁴ Rom. viii. 23. ⁵ Ps. cx. 1. ⁶ 2 Cor. xii. 2. ⁷ James v. 7.

⁸ 1 Peter iv. 13. ⁹ Acts xiv. 22. ¹⁰ Coloss. ii. 6.

In the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters it is shown, that although the Jews as a nation, by reason of their rejection of Christ, are for the time being set on one side, God is not thereby turned from his declared purpose, that in '*the seed of Abraham shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.*'¹ Nor is it to be inferred, from this setting aside of Israel, that *dominion* is to be given to the Gentiles, instead of to the Jews. '*The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*'² '*Salvation is of the Jews.*'³

Although, therefore, God has '*visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name,*'⁴ who, together with such of the Jewish nation as are '*Jews inwardly,*'⁵ are to be regarded as '*a kind of firstfruits of his creatures,*'⁶ and, as '*the church, which is his body,*'⁷ are to reign with Christ ('*who is risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept*'),⁸ yet in due time, when all his enemies have been made his footstool, '*He whose right it is,*'⁹ will at length have dominion over all things, both in heaven and earth, not as '*the god of forces,*'¹⁰ but over a people who, '*in the day of his power, will be a willing people.*'¹¹ As it is written, '*At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.*'¹²

In the five remaining chapters of the epistle is shown forth, how the Lord's people are to '*occupy till He come,*'¹³ and how, '*through patience and comfort of the scriptures,*'¹⁴ by their conduct towards, and intercourse with, their fellow believers, by their subjection and obedience to '*the powers that be,*'¹⁵ and by their attitude towards '*them that are without,*'¹⁶ '*the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified, in and by them.*'¹⁷

THE AUTHOR.

KILBOWIE, OBAN.

April, 1924.

¹ Gen. xxii. 18

² Rom. xi. 29.

³ John iv. 22.

⁴ Acts xv. 14.

⁵ Rom. ii. 29.

⁶ James i. 18.

⁷ Ephes. i. 23.

⁸ 1 Cor. xv. 20.

⁹ Ezek. xxi. 27

¹⁰ Dan. xi. 38.

¹¹ Ps. cx. 3.

¹² Philip. ii. 10.

¹³ Luke xix. 13.

¹⁴ Rom. xv. 4.

¹⁵ Rom. xiii. 1.

¹⁶ 1 Thess. iv. 12.

¹⁷ 2 Thess. i. 12.

CHAPTER I.

Verse 1. Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.

Paul. Who is *Paul*?—not yet St. Paul—he must die, and his personality be shrouded in the mists of time, before he can be canonized—‘*Ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your Fathers killed them.*’¹

Who is this man Paul, sitting in his tent at Corinth, inditing a letter, or, as seen later on, like Jonah entering Nineveh, approaching the city of Rome on foot, in ‘*bodily presence weak, his speech contemptible,*’² *what is his business in Rome?*

A *Servant*. He admits that he is a *servant*, not like Jonah, a prophet. The *role* of a servant has many advantages—if he has not the freedom of a master he has freedom from wearing responsibility and anxious care—he does not journey at his own charges—he is furnished with all he requires—he is sure of his wages—he cannot be a loser—he will be supported and backed up by all the power and resources of his master.

Paul, as is every Believer, was a servant by *creation*—he was made for a purpose, he was ‘*created unto*’³; he was a servant by *conquest*, a slave taken in war—‘*suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven; and he fell to the earth*’⁴—he surrendered on the spot; he was a servant by *purchase*, for he had been ‘*bought with a price*’⁵; he was a servant by *self-dedication*—‘*I love my master . . . I will not go out free,*’⁶ ‘*mine ears hast thou digged,*’⁷ I will ‘*serve thee for ever.*’⁸ On all these four grounds God had a claim upon, a title to, the services of Paul, in the same way as he has upon those of every Believer.

How valuable is a good servant ! how dependent is a master upon the faithfulness and capacity of his servants ! They can do for him things he cannot do for himself.

God’s servants are *made* servants by selection, or, in theological language, by election—they are *continued* servants by preventing grace, by preserving mercy, and by persevering love—they are *valued* as servants for what they are, and for what they do, and their wages are proportioned to the services they render—‘*I love them that love me,*’⁸ ‘*them that honour me I will honour.*’⁹

¹ Luke xi. 47.

² 2 Cor. x. 10.

³ Eph. ii. 10.

⁴ Acts ix. 3, 4.

⁵ 1 Cor. vii. 23.

⁶ Ex. xxi. 5, 6.

⁷ Ps. xl. 6.

⁸ Prov. viii. 17.

⁹ 1 Sam. ii. 30.

Of Jesus Christ. But, while admitting he is but a servant, the apostle adds that he is a servant of Jesus Christ. What matter the meanness of his appearance? His personality is not of importance—his individuality is and should be merged, lost sight of—the servant is not occupied with himself, others are not occupied with what he is—the important question is, whose livery does he wear? whom does he represent? what is the mission with which he is charged?

Called to be an apostle. How was the Apostle called into the service of Jesus Christ? was he the architect of his own fortunes?—did he in the first instance search out and, as it were, apply for the situation? No, his calling was a third, not the first link, in the chain of God's providences.

He was in the first instance '*chosen . . . before the foundation of the world,*'¹ and in the next place *separated*; '*who separated me from my mother's womb,*'² that is, before he was born he was, in God's purpose and plan, chosen unto salvation, and set apart to the special work of preaching the Gospel—but until *called*, he kicked against the pricks and persecuted the very Son of God—'*I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest,*'³ being '*exceedingly mad against*' the Lord's people, '*persecuting them even unto strange cities.*'⁴

There was no room, therefore, in the Apostle's case, as there is none in that of any Believer, for boasting or self-congratulation, but only for wonder and amazement, for grateful and admiring love.

God calls '*by his grace,*'⁵ that is, '*according to his* (not our) *purpose;*'⁶ God calls *irresistibly*, the callings of God are '*without repentance,*'⁷ that is, they are effectual—the *elect* will assuredly in due time be *called*, themselves or their surroundings notwithstanding; for '*who hath resisted his will?*'⁸ or defeated his purposes? Those called will also in due course be *sanctified*, for he hath called us with an *holy* calling, '*not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,*'⁹ and sanctification is followed in due time by *glorification*, for the elect are '*partakers of the heavenly calling.*'¹⁰

Separated. Paul was not called, as some are, to be a pastor, whose office it is to stay at home and feed the flock, nor was he a mere missionary, an evangelist, much less was he called to a contemplative life, to be an angel, or a seraph, but he was specially set apart, by divine appointment, to be an apostle—to him it was said '*Go,*' and go he did, into all the world, to preach the gospel, to everybody, everywhere.

¹ Eph. i. 4.

² Gal. i. 15.

³ Acts xxii. 8.

⁴ Acts xxvi. 11.

⁵ Gal. i. 15.

⁶ Rom. viii. 28.

⁷ Rom. xi. 29.

⁸ Rom. ix. 19.

⁹ 2 Tim. i. 9.

¹⁰ Heb. iii. 1.

Unto the gospel of God. And he was separated unto the gospel of God—his special department of service being to publish glad tidings—good news from God. Although only a servant, '*in bodily presence weak, and in speech contemptible,*' he was the bearer, at first hand, of intelligence from God, of intelligence intensely interesting and profoundly important—*this was his business in Rome.*

Verse 2. (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures.)

The intelligence of which Paul was the bearer, although '*news,*' was in a sense not news, for what Paul declared and preached had been *promised afore*, for it had been made known and proclaimed to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden—not in all its fulness indeed, but in the form of a promise, enshrined in a '*dark saying.*'¹ *It (the seed) shall bruise thy (the serpent's) head and thou (the serpent) shalt bruise his heel.*'²

God's promissory notes are first-class paper, though drawn at long dates—this was a bill not at four months, but at four thousand years—still, none the less, his promises are an assured certainty—at maturity, at their due dates, within the days of grace, his bills will be met.

Of this character are all God's promises—it is proverbial in human affairs that, what quickly comes, quickly goes, but that, what is slowly gained, is long kept; and so it is with God's good things—they have long to be waited for, but once obtained they will endure to eternity.

By his prophets. God's servants in earlier stages had been neither pastors, missionaries, evangelists, nor apostles, but prophets—they were endued with the '*spirit of prophecy*'³—they spake as they were '*moved by the Holy Ghost.*'⁴ They searched as to that which '*the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow*'⁵—they uttered that they '*understood not*'⁶—they were the bearers, not of *intelligence*, but, as it were, of *sealed instructions*.

In the holy Scriptures. The information, in earlier times enshrined in the promises but now opened to the understandings of men, was deposited in the holy Scriptures, having, in God's providence been committed to writing. By the same providence these writings have been preserved both from destruction and mutilation. Notwithstanding the uncertain and perishing nature of the instrumentalities by which they were handed on from age to age, by the agency of mind and memory, by transcription on

¹ Ps. lxxviii. 2.

² Gen. iii. 15.

³ Rev. xix. 10.

⁴ 2 Peter i. 21.

⁵ 1 Peter i. 11.

⁶ Job xlii 3.

paper, skin, wood, and stone, and in spite of the enemies interested in their destruction, they remain to-day practically unimpaired, untarnished, and uninjured.

Verse 3. Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.

The information, the good news from God, the intelligence of which Paul was the bearer, was *concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord*. Paul came to make it known to all men—First, that ‘*God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son*’ and sent him into the world ‘*that the world through him might be saved*,’¹—Secondly, that Jesus of Nazareth, a man who had both lived and died, was this Son of God, and Thirdly, that, having now risen again, he was seated at the right hand of God as the Lord of Glory—all power being given to him in heaven and in earth.

This man, for he was born of a woman, was, as the prophets had foretold, in the line of David. The germ promise as to the ‘*seed of the woman*,’ now at last appears above ground, and is sending forth its first shoot; that which was hidden below the ground, as it were, comes to the surface and is plainly seen; that which until now was a mystery, commences to be made plain.

Verse 4. And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

Though as a man, he lived, obeyed, served, died, yet being divine and without sin, his soul could not be left in hell, nor his body suffered to see corruption,² nor could he be otherwise than raised from among the dead. Justice itself would demand this. His *resurrection from the dead declared*, attested, and proclaimed, both that Jesus was the Son of God, and that he was perfect and without sin. Although as Man, Jesus was *raised* from the dead, as the God Man, he *rose* from the dead. It was not divine mercy which raised him. Divine Justice could not restrain him from rising. ‘*I have power to lay it (my life) down, and I have power to take it again.*’³

And this was *according to the spirit of holiness*, for it would not have been consistent with the divine perfections that one who was without sin should die. That, in Jesus Christ, which was human, ‘*death passed upon*’⁴ it, but death could not so much as touch that in him which was divine, and it had no power over that in him which was without sin, hence ‘*neither his flesh*

¹ John iii. 16, 17.

² Ps. xvi. 10.

³ John x. 18.

⁴ Rom. v. 12.

*did see corruption.*¹ Justice was satisfied—it has no claim except on that which is sinful. It was injustice in man to crucify Christ. It would have been injustice on God's part to have left the soul of Christ in Hades, or to have suffered his body to see corruption.

Verse 5. By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name.

Paul proceeds to produce his credentials and the terms of his commission. His power and authority, effectually to deliver his good news, are, he says, derived from the risen Jesus,—*'a great door and effectual is opened unto me,'*²—*'the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power,'*³—*'He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles.'*⁴

His commission was to those *among all nations*, who in the divine counsels were chosen and elect, whether Jew or Gentile—both those to whom the promises had been made, and who on this ground had a clear *title* to participate in the benefit of Christ's death and resurrection, and those to whom no promises had been made, but who were equally to share in these benefits.

His commission was to call upon all such, not to obey but to believe; what is required of such is not *the obedience of works*, but *the obedience of faith*—not that they should *work out* a righteousness of their own, but that they should *accept* a righteousness *obtained for them*, by him, whose *'name is Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins,'*⁵—whose servant Paul was.

Paul's title to *apostleship* was based upon the fact that he had received his commission directly from the Lord Jesus himself—*'Am I not an apostle? . . . have I not seen Jesus our Lord?'*⁶ It was this which constituted him an apostle.

Verse 6. Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ.

Those to whom he wrote had been called to believe the Gospel—they had obeyed the call—they had yielded *'obedience to the faith.'* They, like Paul, were *chosen* before the foundation of the world—they, too, like Paul, had been *called*. Called to be saints, if not to be apostles. Every Believer is a called one, is the subject of a divine choice and the object of a divine call.

¹ Acts ii. 31.

² 1 Cor. xvi. 9.

³ Eph. iii. 7.

⁴ Gal. ii. 8.

⁵ Matt. i. 21.

⁶ 1 Cor. ix. 1.

Verse 7. To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints ; Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The epistle is addressed to all elect and called ones in Rome. It is a closed letter, not an open circular. It is addressed to certain specified individuals, not to all who may see or hear it; yet it is addressed to all '*elect and called ones*,' everywhere, for '*no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation.*'¹

Although in a sense all his creatures are beloved of God, for '*God so loved the world*,'² yet for some God has a special and peculiar love.

God's *general* love is shown by his bountiful provision for the wants and happiness of all his creatures—'*The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.*'³ '*He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust*'⁴—and by the multitude of checks and restraints which he has put upon excess, and running riot in sin. The suffering entailed by sin is the great check upon it, and is therefore really a manifestation of love.

God's *special and peculiar* love is set upon those who fear, seek, serve, and love him. They are precious in his sight, are valued by him, are a source of delight to him. To all such the golden sceptre is held out—they may draw near with confidence; such are at peace with God—no longer at war; and such may look for the blessings of peace instead of the sufferings and distress of war—for all that it is in the power of God the Father and of the Lord Jesus Christ to bestow.

Verse 8. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

Although most of those to whom he wrote were strangers to Paul, although he had neither seen them nor heard their speech, although he had not derived any benefits from them, was in no way indebted to them, yet he thanked God that, as the result of his and their union with Jesus Christ, he was greatly drawn towards them, was attracted by them, and had delight in them—but this not because of their great or good works, their benevolence, gifts, or graces, but because of the simplicity and clearness of their faith.

¹ 2 Peter i. 20.

² John iii. 16.

³ Ps. cxlv. 9.

⁴ Matt. v. 45.

This most attractive grace, like some rare gem, wonderful picture, lovely scenery, he found it most delightful to contemplate. Does the vulture scent the carrion from afar—the eagle her prey, the fly the smell of corruption?—and shall not the fruits of the Spirit waft their perfumes all around, delighting the spirits and exciting the gratitude of every member of the divine family? Shall the first cry of the new-born babe thrill its mother—the first opening of its eyes delight every member of the family, and shall not faith, one of the earliest exercises of a new spiritual existence, call into play the delights of family affection? For what is faith but the opening of the eyes, the removing of the veil which is upon every natural mind—the opening of the mouth—‘*if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus*’;¹ the unstopping of the ear—‘*they that hear shall live.*’²

As we bless God for our creation, so here Paul blesses God for the new creatures in Christ, in Rome, telling them that the whole family of God is looking on and rejoicing in their faith—for it is an indication of life begun.

Verse 9. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.

Many may be witnesses to the way and extent to which we use our feet, hands, voice, writings, but God alone searches the heart, and tries the spirit. He alone can testify to what goes on within.

Our spirits are the source and fountain of our actions, and, although unknown to our fellow-men, there may be going on there what will one day come forth. Thoughts and feelings, bred of loneliness and retirement, may have been called into being by what we have heard of others, and these may be smouldering and heating in readiness for the moment when, as in Paul’s case, they can find vent. We may be *serving* God and our fellow-men *with our spirits*, as truly as a tree is growing underground.

It is possible to obtain for others by prayer, what they cannot, or do not, obtain for themselves. The multitudes not only came to Jesus to be healed themselves, but they brought those also who otherwise would not, or could not, have been healed. Paul reached multitudes by his preaching, but possibly more by his prayers—‘*prayer moves the arm that moves the world.*’ Preaching is a rare gift—prayer is a rarer one. Preaching, like a sword, is a weapon to use at close quarters; those afar off cannot be reached by it. Prayer, like a breach-loader has longer range, and under some circumstances is even more effective.

¹ Rom. x. 9.

² John v. 25.

Verse 10. Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

The pressure in Paul's case is increasing—the desire to see them, to come into personal contact with them, is becoming irresistible. What he has heard rejoices him, attracts him, and leads him to ask of God that, in some way or other, difficulties and impediments may be removed, so that he may arrive at Rome without having lost, through the wear and tear of care or distress, the freshness of his joy and interest in them.

Verse 11. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established.

I have heard of you, but I long to see you. I know you have life, but you need nourishment—and I rejoice in the prospect of sharing with you, of imparting to you, some of those spiritual joys which have been bestowed on me; of making known to you the things revealed to me, and which have rejoiced, delighted, astonished, and amazed my spirit; of feasting with you on what the prophet Isaiah termed '*fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined*,'¹ because this is what you need, if the life begun, is to grow, and become an established experimental factor in your existence.

Verse 12. That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

Christian fellowship is one of the appointed means of grace—'*iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend*'²—'*he that watereth shall be watered also himself*.'³ Sowers reap. It is not for your sake alone that I long to see you—it is for my own, too. I expect to get as much as I give.

¹ Isaiah xxv. 6.

² Prov. xxvii. 17.

³ Prov. xi. 25.

Verse 13. Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.

And I would not have you suppose that this is a new idea, a sudden or a passing thought. No, I have long looked forward to our meeting. I have often proposed to visit you, but circumstances have again and again rendered it impossible. I have long felt that there was fruit to be gathered in your orchard, amongst you Gentiles at Rome, the capital of the Empire, as well as amongst the many Gentiles in its outlying dependencies.

Verse 14. I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians ; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

For I have gathered fruit, I have done good and I have got good, among all sorts and conditions of men—amongst the polished intelligences of Greece, as well as amongst the rough untutored barbarians of the Archipelago—amongst the educated and the uneducated. The Gospel is a common denominator, a universal solvent, *'for ye are all one in Christ Jesus,'*¹ *'by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body,'*² *'gather together in one.'*³

Verse 15. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

There is, therefore, nothing to prevent my preaching the gospel in Rome. Nothing in its language or modes of thought—nothing in its vices or its virtues—nothing in its learning or its tastes.

Verse 16. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ : for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth ; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

That so simple an instrumentality as that of preaching can produce such effects—that the mere announcement and revelation

¹ Gal. iii. 28.

² 1 Cor. xii. 13.

³ Eph. i. 10.

of what God has done, is doing, and will do, through and by his Son, can be followed by such changes—that a man, simply as the result of believing what is divinely revealed, can be transformed here, and made meet, in due time, to be translated to glory, may seem incredible, yet this is so. I have seen the effects produced by the simple preaching of the gospel, I have experienced them, and I am not ashamed, as a soldier of the cross, of being armed with this primitive weapon. Did not David slay the Philistine with a sling and a stone? *'The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.'*¹

The attempt to keep the law may do wonders, it may moderate excess, it may transform the exterior, and change the direction of men's lives, but it will end by making them worse instead of better.

The Law was not given in order to *convert*—it was given in order to *convict*—it was given *'that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful,'*² *'the law entered that the offence might abound.'*³ A dogged determination to keep the law, led, and leads, to *'will worship,'*⁴ i.e., to a worship of men's own devising, to making men *'enemies of the cross of Christ'*⁵—to pride, to contempt for, and to hatred of, the Lord's people.

But nothing can resist the power of the gospel nor emasculate its virtues—what the Law cannot do, the gospel can, and it is to be preached to every creature—although, by divine appointment, to the Jew first, and through the Jew to the Greek.

Jesus was a Jew—the apostle Paul was a Jew; all the apostles were Jews, but the divine virtue which first went forth from Jesus, *'I perceive that virtue is gone out of me,'*⁶ did not stop at the Jew—it passed on to the Gentile. The Jew is saved by faith—the Gentile is saved *through* faith.⁷ Of Abraham it was said, *'in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed,'*⁸ because the virtue was to pass through him and his seed, to the nations at large.

Verse 17. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith : as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

The Gospel makes it clear that none but a perfect righteousness will meet God's requirements. In God's view, *'all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.'*⁹ The Gospel throws a searchlight upon the steps, the stages, by which God has led men on through succeeding dispensations—the truth being the same in all, viz., that righteousness is not by the deeds of the law—it is not to be *ATTAINED* by *doing*—*righteousness* is of *faith*, and is to

¹ Heb. iv. 12.² Rom. vii. 13.³ Rom. v. 20.⁴ Col. ii. 23.⁵ Phil. iii. 18.⁶ Luke viii. 46.⁷ Rom. iii. 30.⁸ Gen. xii. 3.⁹ Isaiah lxiv. 6.

be OBTAINED as the result of the doings of another; it is imputed to those who apprehend this—that is to say, those who apprehend this truth have the benefit of it—they have life,—‘*they that hear, (and, of course, believe what they hear) ‘shall live.’*’¹

From faith to faith. The Old Testament revealed much; the New Testament reveals far more. It removes veils, and clears up mysteries. The Old Testament *contained* all truth, but in an embryo condition, just as the acorn contains the oak. Something is seen of the oak in the first shoots of the acorn, more still in the young sapling, but most in the full-grown tree.

The Old Testament made it clear that God must and will punish sin, and that nothing less than a perfect righteousness avails with him. It made it clear, too, that fallen humanity, even under the most favourable conditions, cannot attain to this perfection of righteousness, and that although the sword of judgment has for the moment been suspended, in deference to the sceptre of mercy, and although the sentence, ‘*the soul that sinneth, it shall die,*’² has not yet been fully executed, yet by the deeds of the law, that is by *doings*, none will or can be justified in his sight. In Old Testament times, before the doctrine of justification by faith was so clearly revealed, and when men were seeking to work out a righteousness of their own, it was said, ‘*The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God . . . there is none that doeth good, no not one.*’³

But the Old Testament revealed also, in divers manners, that a way of salvation had been provided, and that life was to be had, by believing, although not by doing, and this in so many words through the prophet Habakkuk, ‘*Behold his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith;*’⁴ that is, a man who is lifted up with self-satisfaction on the ground of something in himself, is not in a right condition of mind and spirit—he who would be just before God must obtain justification from without, not from within.

God has a lower and an upper form in his school. The Old Testament was the text-book for the lower form, for beginners. The New Testament is the text-book for the upper form, for the more advanced.

Verse 18. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

In the Old Testament, as much as in the New, God revealed his abhorrence and hatred of *ungodliness*, of un-god-likeness, of

¹ John v. 25.

² Ezek. xviii. 20.

³ Ps. xiv. 2, 3.

⁴ Hab. ii. 4.

that which is unlike himself—and of *unrighteousness* between man and man—of un-rightness, that is, of any departure from his standard of what is right—of sin against the first table or against the second—and his abhorrence, too, of *hypocrisy*—of righteous words but unrighteousness doings—or of *error*, that is, of the truth held in unrighteousness; of those having, as had the Jews, a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

In Old Testament times, as in New, God allowed these things to take their course—he allowed men to eat of the fruit of their doings, so as thereby to reveal the sinfulness of sin.

Verse 19. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

God has endowed the human race with conscience, as he has the animal creation with instinct, so that all may know good from evil—as it is manifest men do, by the readiness with which they perceive and resent wrongdoing when it affects themselves.

God has in measure revealed himself to all men—for, so far at least as offences against their fellow-men are concerned, or, in other words, so far as the second table of the Law is concerned, all men have knowledge, they know right from wrong—or might know it if they would—and this apart from and without revelation—all have what we call the light of Nature. And this Lamp is divinely lit—it is derived from God the Son and doubtless is communicated by God the Holy Ghost—for Jesus Christ is '*the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*'¹

Thus the Jew and the Gentile, both those having the light of revelation, and those having the light of Nature only, may be of the number of those who '*were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost.*'²

Verse 20. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.

By the light of Nature man cannot see very much or very far, but what the light of Nature does show, it shows clearly, and what it does explain is made perfectly intelligible to the simplest of minds.

¹ John i. 9.

² Heb. vi. 4.

The greater number of those who have the light of Revelation are in darkness, but this is not because they have no light, but because they do not walk in the light they have. And such are neither better nor worse than those who, in olden times, or now in heathen countries, having the light of Nature only, were or are also in darkness—but this again is not because they have no light, but because they do not walk in the light they have.

None therefore will be able to put forward, as an excuse for sin, their want of knowledge.

Verse 21. Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

*'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: but it is 'because thou hast rejected knowledge' that 'I will also reject thee.'*¹ It is a divine appointment that *'whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.'*² *'Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.'*³

Their ignorance and blindness were the result of a wilful departure, a turning away from God. Had they turned to God, they would have been enlightened instead of being darkened. *'He that hath, to him shall be given'*⁴—their light would have been increased, they would have grown in knowledge. Had they acknowledged him, he would have led them on, but, having turned away from God, they got further and further from him, they grew in ignorance, became more and more besotted until at length the light that was in them became darkness, and there was fulfilled in them the saying of our Lord, *'if . . . the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.'*⁵

Verse 22. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

Left, then, to their own wisdom, having sought from within what is only to be had from without, they became more and more foolish, instead of wiser and wiser.

Verse 23. And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

¹ Hosea iv. 6.

² Matt. xiii. 12.

³ Luke xi. 35.

⁴ Mark iv. 25.

⁵ Matt. vi. 23.

They soon discovered, however, that they needed a God, and so, in their folly, proceeded to *make*, not a god, but *gods*—quantity to make up for quality. But here their powerlessness was manifested—for creative power is a divine prerogative—and all they could do was to copy some of the designs of the true God and then, by the aid of their darkened imagination, fancy and profess to believe that these idols were endowed with supernatural power.

Verse 24. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves : 25. Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 26. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another ; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

The sin of *idolatry* is, of all sins, that which God most abhors and most severely punishes. '*If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you.*'¹ '*They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.*'²

For this sin—which is a changing and reversing of God's order of things an introducing of confusion into the relation between God and man, a throwing over of God and a putting other Beings into his place—God *retaliates*, as it were, by changing and reversing the relation between man and his fellow-creatures.

Those natural instincts, which, in the brute creation lead animals to walk within the lines laid down by an allwise providence, and to use their powers and functions for the purposes only for which they were given, are, in idolaters, changed and reversed. Those natural affections, which were ordained for the development and increase of happiness, are

¹ Joshua xxiv. 20.

² Jonah ii. 8.

changed into passions, which turn happiness into torment—wholesome desires into insatiable thirst—healthy tastes into morbid and unquenchable appetite—this immoderate and indiscriminate exercise of the desires of the flesh being followed by its own special and peculiar bodily diseases and tormenting agony.

Verse 28. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.

And further, inasmuch as they turn away their minds from God and from acquiring a knowledge of his will and ways, inasmuch as idolaters in their very nature '*will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts*,'¹ nor indeed in any of them—God again *retaliates*, so to speak, by clouding their minds, by perverting their judgment, so that they can no longer see what is true wisdom, and they are led to do deliberately, and in cold blood, those things which, to the pure mind, are incredibly horrible.

Verse 29. Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers.

Their own devices leading them into the breaking of every law and ordinance in the divine economy.

Verses 30 and 31. Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.

And leading them into everything that is hateful and hideous in matters of government, in trading and social intercourse, in family life and individual character.

¹ Ps. x. 4.

Verse 32. Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but have pleasure in them that do them.

Does a knowledge of what is right and wrong restrain men from sin, or lead to holiness?—does a knowledge that sin is surely followed by judgment deter from sin or conduce to holiness? No—knowledge has no converting power, it rather leads men to exult in rebellion against God, to find delight in becoming open enemies themselves and in winning over others to a like condition. Idolaters, those who turn away *from*, instead of turning *to*, God, become not only deserters but rebels, open and declared enemies. They not only dare to act on the defensive, but they declare war against the Most High—not content to go on their way alone, they become intent on drawing and compelling others to follow their pernicious ways.

And what can the end of this be? How can such be delivered '*from going down to the pit*'? ¹ Do not such need a Saviour? '*is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?*' ²—unless a ransom can be found, must not such be numbered amongst those of whom it is predicted, that *He* who created (and does create) '*by the breath of his mouth*' ³ will '*consume them with the spirit of his mouth*'? ⁴

¹ Job xxxiii. 24. ² Jer. viii. 22. ³ Ps. xxxiii. 6. ⁴ 2 Thess. ii. 8.

CHAPTER II.

Verse 1. Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

A man who is able to form an opinion, and to pronounce judgment, on the conduct of others, can, if he *will*, pronounce judgment on his own conduct. When, therefore, he comes to stand before the bar of God it will be vain to plead ignorance as an excuse for sin. It is not through ignorance, but on some other account that a man fails to condemn, in himself, what he does condemn, in others. To condemn in others what he himself does, is, in effect, to pass judgment on himself.

Verse 2. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

Mankind's final court of appeal is the High Court of Heaven—'God is the Judge of all the earth.'¹ His judgments are *settled law*—from them there is no appeal. And his decisions will be just, not capricious, but according to law. He will sit to administer justice, and in his court there will be no departure, in either direction, from strict justice. Those who appeal to law, will receive sentence according to law.

Verse 3. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

For those, therefore, who may appear before God to plead for justice, there can be no escape—the law will be against them; out of their own mouths they will be condemned; for they will be shown to have condemned in others what they have done themselves, and therefore that they have been wilful breakers of the law.

¹ Gen. xviii. 25 ; Ps. xciv. 2 ; Heb. xii. 23.

Verse 4. Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

Shall a man think that because God has not brought him to judgment for his first offence, but has again and again passed by his transgressions, exercising goodness and forbearance, and has borne patiently with sins and crimes, which nevertheless have '*grieved him at his heart*,'¹ that therefore he cannot or will not bring him to judgment at all? Has God's patience only had the effect of leading the man to heightened thoughts of himself and to lowered views of God, and blinded him to the purpose of God's patience, which is to melt him into penitence and submission?

Verse 5. But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

Does he not see that those who shut their eyes to the requirements of law, and rest in the belief that they will be able to justify themselves before God, give evidence of a hardness and hardening of heart which will go on and on, aggravating, increasing, heaping up and accumulating evidence of guilt, and ground for condemnation?

A thief who is condemned for a first offence, is as guilty as one who has long escaped but is at last brought to judgment—both are alike guilty of breaking the law, although the one, through having escaped early detection, has heaped up, has treasured up, against the day in which he is convicted, an overwhelming body of evidence as to his being a thief. Both are punished because they are thieves, law breakers—not for the quantity, but for the quality of their guilt.

It may be replied: but by human law the punishment of theft is proportioned to the quality of the theft; true, but a man who commits one murder receives the same punishment as he who commits fifty. And with God, '*whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*'² We may demur to this. We may find fault with the strictness of God's laws, but to what purpose is it to resist the majesty of the law?

¹ Gen. vi. 6.

² James ii. 10.

God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are his ways our ways.¹ He is '*high above all the earth.*'² In permitting and tolerating the existence of evil, his plan and purpose appears to be, thereby to make known and demonstrate the infinite perfection of Divine Justice and Righteousness, as well as of Divine Power, Divine Wisdom and Divine Love.

Verse 6. Who will render to every man according to his deeds.

God's slowness to anger does not mean that he will pass by, overlook or condone sin. No, sooner or later, but certainly, he will '*bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.*'³

Verse 7. To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.

Those who, as the result of a hidden work of grace, patiently walk in and up to the light given them—who in this way and in these paths seek for glory and honour and immortality—such are in the '*narrow . . . way which leadeth unto life,*'⁴ and such will in the end enter upon, and into, a new state, and have eternal life.

Verse 8. But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath.

But those who challenge the justice of God's requirements, instead of submitting to and obeying his law, those who, as the result of a sinful and unchanged heart, withstand and disobey the admonitions of conscience, and the other revelations of God's will, yielding to and obeying the suggestions of the world, the flesh, and the devil—such will one day experience, and then will understand, God's indignation against and wrath at sin, in even its smallest forms and earliest beginnings.

¹ Isaiah lv. 8.

² Ps. xcvi. 9.

³ Eccles. xii. 14.

⁴ Matt. vii. 14.

Verse 9. Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.

Tribulation and anguish await the evil doer, whether he be a Jew, to whom the way of truth has, by revelation and instruction, been made abundantly clear, or whether he be a Gentile, who has had only the light of conscience, of nature, and of providence. Against the Jew the evidence that he has been a law breaker will be overwhelming—against the Gentile it will be abundantly sufficient.

Verse 10. But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.

But glory, honour, and peace, await those who do well, whether they be Jews, to whom first the rewards of well doing were by revelation clearly set forth and made known, or whether they be Gentiles, to whom the rewards of well doing were in Old Testament times unrevealed and unknown, or whether they be heathens, who to this day may be in complete ignorance of them.

Verse 11. For there is no respect of persons with God.

For though God, in olden times, revealed himself more fully to the Jew than to the Gentile, and in these later days has given more light and greater advantages to some than to others, yet, in the world to come, all will be on the same footing, and every man will be judged *'according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.'*¹

Verse 12. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.

¹ 2 Cor. viii. 12.

Those who have sinned against the light of nature and of conscience will be convicted on that ground, and the evidence against them will be complete. Those who have sinned against the light of revelation will be convicted on that ground, but the evidence against *them* will be overwhelming.

The *evidence* against the Jew and the *evidence* against the Gentile will be different, but their guilt will be the same—both will be shown to be breakers of God's law; in the day of judgment all sinners will be on the same footing, and all will suffer the extreme penalty of the law—for one sin makes a sinner, as one murder makes a murderer.

Verse 13. (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

A Jew may not think to justify himself before God on the ground of the abundance of the revelation made to him, as compared with that made to the Gentile; as well might a well-educated, well-taught man, who murders, plead his knowledge of and acquaintance with the law relating to murder, as a ground of acquittal. No, it is not knowledge of good and evil, but obedience to that which is known, which alone can justify.

Verse 14. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves.

The Gentiles, or those to whom no divine revelation has been made, and who therefore '*have not the law*,' if, by obedience to the light of nature, they do those things which the law enjoins, prove that the law is, in measure, within them, and that they are being directed by it.

Verse 15. Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.)

Their conduct shows that the requirements of the law have been engraved by divine power upon the table of their hearts, that they have an enlightened conscience, which accuses them when they do wrong, and commends them when they do right, and that, although not taught from without, as were the Jews, they have been taught from within, by the movings of the Spirit of God, responded to on their part by a tender conscience, a watchful spirit, and diligent attention—the fruit of this appearing in their lives.

Verse 16. In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

All this will plainly appear at the Day of Judgment, when it will be shown, that all have sinned against light and against knowledge, and that while the majority of mankind have from the first gone wholly astray, a small minority, of both Jews and Gentiles, have sought to keep the law, and trusted to be thereby justified; but it will be shown, too, that ‘*by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight,*’¹ and that none can or will, *on this ground*, be acquitted of sin nor saved from its penalties.

It was part of the ‘*good news*’ which Paul was commissioned to announce, that the day is fixed, when the great cause between God and Man is to be heard and determined, and that the Judge who is to officiate on that awful occasion has been nominated; and that by Him those things which are now secrets, mysteries, and perplexities, will *then* be made as clear as noonday.

Verse 17. Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God.

In regard to this day, Paul puts it to the Jew: Is he relying upon his nation having been made the depository of the Law? and does he glory in the fact that he is a citizen of the favoured nation singled out for this privilege? does he boast that he is thereby shown to be a privileged person, one of God’s favoured ones, and that he therefore has nothing to fear?

Verse 18. And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law.

¹ Rom. iii. 20.

Does he boast that he is not, like others, in ignorance of what God requires—that he, through his acquaintance with the divine revelation, is able to discern between what is right and what is wrong—to distinguish between little sins and great sins, between secret sin and open sin ?

Verse 19. And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness.

Has he confidence in his ability to instruct the ignorant and to answer the sophistries of the philosopher, to clear away their subterfuges and to prove them all to be guilty before God ?

Verse 20. An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

That he is able to show the foolish their folly, and to bring up the young in the ways of righteousness. That he not only has the law, but that he alone is able to expound its truths, and to make it plain, clear, and intelligible.

Verse 21. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

Shall he who has knowledge which enables him to teach others, fail to practice what he preaches, and yet expect to justify himself at the Judgment seat of Christ ? As well might a man who prosecutes another for stealing, steal himself, and yet expect to go uncondemned when charged with theft, because of his zeal and ability as an upholder of the law.

Verse 22. Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery ? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege ?

He who says that vice is sin, does he practice vice and yet look to be acquitted when charged with sin, on the ground of having taught God's laws to others? or he who sees and disapproves idolatry in others, can he rob God of his dues, and yet plead not guilty to the charge of having broken God's laws on this subject so plainly set out in the Ten Commandments?

Verse 23. Thou that makest thy boast of the law through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?

He who boasts of his knowledge and privileges, as one of those to whom God has directly and plainly made known his laws—can he break those laws, and thus deliberately insult the Divine Majesty, and yet expect not to be dealt with as a breaker of the laws?

Verse 24. For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

It was said to David by Nathan, '*because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.*'¹ And it is proverbial, that those who are not Christians, and who, as such, are referred to as Gentiles, are turned away and repelled from the desire to know God, by the ill conduct of those who yet bear his name and teach his Word. Such naturally say to themselves: 'If a knowledge of God produces such effects, breeds such hypocrites, save us from a knowledge of God!' And it was for the same reasons that through Jewish practices, Jewish doctrine came to be hated and anathematized by the Gentiles.

Verse 25. For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but ~~if~~ thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.

Circumcision, the badge of divine favour, and the pledge of conformity to God's law, is an honour, a privilege, and of profit,

¹ 2 Sam. xii. 14.

if it tend to righteousness, but it is an empty formality, and wholly valueless, if the wearer of it does not keep his pledge. In such case, although be-badged, he is outside the pale of Jewish privilege, and is one of the uncircumcised.

Verse 26. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?

Whereas one who does not wear the badge, but who yet conforms to what the badge implies and witnesses to, thereby places himself inside the pale of Jewish privilege, and becomes as one of the circumcised.

Verse 27. And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law ?

And he who has not the privilege of divine revelation, and yet, by the light of nature, or in some other way, has, through grace, attained to a knowledge of what God requires, and has yielded obedience thereto, shall not his conduct condemn the Jew, who, knowing what is right, and professing to approve it, does it not ?

Verse 28. For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly ; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh.

For God looks not at the outward appearance, but at the heart. Badges are nothing to him, useful and needful as they may be to, and for, men. In God's sight, he is not one of the chosen people, the elect, who wears the badge, but he who conforms to what it betokens—the badge in the flesh is nothing, unless the law, of which it is the covenant sign, be engraved on the heart—it is otherwise a counterfeit, and wholly valueless, except indeed, as evidence that he who exhibits it, is a hypocrite, a coiner of base metal, a passer of bad money.

Verse 29. But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

But he who has the law engraved on his heart, whose conformity to God's requirements is one of inward desire and purpose, whose obedience is a matter of life, and not merely of the lip—he, although he may not have, or exhibit the badge in his flesh, and therefore may not be regarded with favour nor be approved among men, yet he is one of God's favoured ones, and is approved and will be honoured by God.

CHAPTER III.

Verse 1. What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?

If these things be so—if circumcision stands for so little in God's sight, and is liable to such abuse among men, what is the advantage, or is there any, in being a Jew; or in circumcision, the badge of Judaism?

Verse 2. Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

There is much advantage, and of varied kind—for, through and by members of the Jewish nation, God revealed himself to men; every spiritual blessing comes to mankind *through* them; they were appointed to be, and in God's providence have been made, living epistles and pictures, exhibiting, in their individual and national life, God's plans, purposes, and modes of dealing with men.

But their chief glory was that they were employed as God's amanuenses, and that in their custody were deposited, and to their care committed, those holy writings the Scriptures, in which are embodied the whole counsel of God.¹ Their appointment to this office was a highly honourable and well paid one, as are all God's appointments.

Verse 3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

Some may say, But the Jews, or at least some of them, although custodians of the Scriptures, did not themselves believe what these writings contained. True; but how could this in any way affect their validity, authenticity, and truth?

¹ Acts xx. 27: John xv. 15.

Verse 4. God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written. That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

Not at all. The Jews were *custodians* only and not *authors* of the revelation of which they had the charge. Had every single Jew been a liar, or not a man of them believed in the truths of revelation, this would not have affected, in even the remotest degree, the authenticity, or veracity of the sacred record.

On the other hand, the use the Jews made of their privileges demonstrates that it is not knowledge, light, advantage, opportunity, good government, which are wanting to make men perfect—the Jews had all these in perfection. Such privileges, it would seem, rather tend to aggravate and make worse—in fact, it was said of the Jews that they were '*worse than the heathen*,'¹ all which goes to confirm the scriptural statement as to man's natural corruption, viz., that '*all men are liars*,'² that '*there is none righteous, no not one*.'³

Indeed, none but God can be said to be infinitely perfect, to have inherent righteousness; to, apart from, independent of, divine support be free from liability to sin. '*Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly*';⁴ and again, '*Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints, yea the heavens are not clean in his sight*.'⁵ '*Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe*,'⁶ is therefore a prayer for angels, as well as for men.

The natural corruption of the human heart, as displayed in the *life* and history of God's favoured people, serves, however, to present in bold relief the righteousness of God and the unrighteousness of his creature man—this being, in fact, the divine purpose and object in recording their history, viz., to show that what God says is true, and that '*his judgments are true and righteous altogether*.'

Verse 5. But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man).

But, it may be objected, are we to be asked to believe that the inevitable and universal tendency to corruption which there is in all created beings, has been allowed to develop itself in man,

¹ 2 Chron. xxxiii. 9. ² Ps. cxvi. 11. ³ Rom. iii. 10. ⁴ Job iv. 18.

⁵ Job xv. 15.

⁶ Ps. cxix. 117.

as a contrast to, and in order to bring into bold relief, God's infinite holiness and spotless purity, and that man's sin is nevertheless to be visited with eternal damnation? Would this be consistent with Infinite righteousness? What reply can be made to this except '*Who art thou that repliest against God?*'¹ '*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*'²

Yet against the one objection may be set another, viz., is sin any the less to be punished, is God's hatred of sin to be marked the less, because its extent and character have been so fully revealed, and by means mysterious indeed but than which no better could have been devised, for '*he hath done all things well.*'³ '*His way is perfect*' '*His work is perfect*'?⁴ Or, again, would it be righteous on God's part, on such grounds, to pass by or belittle sin?

Verse 6. God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?

No, surely! for how could God sit in judgment on the world and administer justice in accordance with the divinely perfect law, if he passed by sin, because it was aggravated, through facilities given for its exhibition?

Verse 7. For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?

But the objector may further insist: if God has obtained glory at my expense—if my corruption and sinfulness have been made use of by God, to bring into relief his holiness, I surely ought not to be visited with the penalties attaching to a breach of the law, but ought rather, although a doer of evil, to be rewarded as a minister of good!

Verse 8. And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil that good may come? whose damnation is just.

¹ Rom. ix. 20.

² Gen. xviii. 25.

³ Mark vii. 37.

⁴ 2 Sam. xxii. 31; Deut. xxxii. 4.

Might it not too be justly argued? Since sin serves so good a purpose, why '*put away sin*'? ¹ Rather let it go on for ever, to the glory of God!

And there were those who averred that this was what the apostle actually taught; some amongst his hearers affirming that he had been heard to say, that it was lawful and right to do evil that good might come; a charge, however, which the apostle characterises as damnably slanderous.

The fact being that those who would argue, or deduce from the doctrine of the natural corruption of the human heart, that we may do evil that good may come, only exhibit the perverting effects of sin on the mind and judgment—the darkness in which men grope—and the confusion of mind to which sin *leads*; and *shows too, how needful it is for God to visit sin* with the most awful of consequences, so that sin may be seen to be exceeding sinful.

It will be noted that the apostle does not attempt to refute the sophistries which the human mind invents and propounds, except by setting one plain truth off against another. *Parallel truths* are frequently to be met with in the Scriptures,² truths seeming to contradict one another, although, of course, they do not really do so. They must and *are reconcilable*, although where and how, is beyond the limits of human ken.

Verse 9. What then? are we better than they? No in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.

But this is an aside, and has not to do with the question before us, which is, that although the Jew has advantage every way, and particularly in being the divinely appointed custodian of the Scriptures and exemplar of the truths contained therein, is he any better intrinsically than the Gentile? No, not in the least—for, as has been shown in Chapter I., the Gentiles are corrupt, and, as has been shown in Chapter II., the Jews are so also; both, therefore, are breakers of the law, both are equally '*under sin*,' there being no difference whatever, save in this, that the evidence against the Jew is clearer and more overwhelming than the evidence against the Gentile.

Verses 10 to 18. 10. As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one. 11. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after

¹ Heb. ix. 26.

² 1 Sam. xv. 29 and 35; Gen. xxii. 1; James i. 13.

God. 12. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. 13. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips. 14. Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. 15. Their feet are swift to shed blood. 16. Destruction and misery are in their ways. 17. And the way of peace have they not known. 18. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Thus confirming the declaration made by God in the Psalms, by the mouth of his servant David (as above), and the description given by him to whom all hearts are open and from whom no secrets are hid, of the effects of sin—in (verse 11) blinding men to the *folly* of turning away from God, instead of seeking him (verse 12), and to the *folly* of going into forbidden paths, they thenceforth becoming unprofitable in the matter of doing good to others. Of how (in verse 13) sin breeds inward corruption which finds vent in filthy talk, in lying words, deceitful deeds, and in cruel slanders with which men destroy the reputation of others—going on (verse 14) to blasphemous language and (verse 15) murderous crimes which bring down (verse 16) destruction upon themselves and misery upon others—all these positive evils going along with (verse 17) the absence from their existence of all peace and happiness, and (verse 18) the banishment from their minds of any thought or even fear of God; so absolutely blinded do they become.

Verse 19. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Now what is said in the Written Law, is clearly addressed to those under the Law, that is to say, to the Jews. The Jew cannot therefore evade the charge of being a law breaker, or do otherwise than plead guilty to being a sinner. The case against him has already, so to speak, been promulgated and judgment given.

And his knowledge and enlightenment enable him to see clearly that if he, the Jew, is a sinner, certainly the Gentile is one also.

Thus all the world, Jews, Gentiles, and Barbarians, are brought in guilty before God, and it is shown to demonstration that there is none righteous upon earth, no not one.

Verse 20. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Thus it is made clear that, *as none have attained, so none can attain*, to perfection, and as nothing less will satisfy divine requirements, it may logically and certainly be concluded that by the works of the law, by pleading obedience to its requirements, none can possibly be justified, or obtain a verdict of acquittal, if and when brought to trial at law.

It is equally clear also that all the law can do is to convince and convict, to condemn and to punish, to make sin exceeding sinful, to, in a sense, make bad worse, to compel men to look in some other direction for deliverance and salvation.

Verse 21. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.

And this is where the Gospel which Paul was commissioned to preach, comes in. It reveals the '*good news*' that although none can attain to the *righteousness of the law*, nor hope for a verdict of acquittal, if tried by the law, yet that a ground for acquittal has been found. '*I have found a ransom*'; ¹ nay, more, that a way has been opened up by which a man may be placed beyond the reach of the law; he '*shall not come into condemnation*' ²; a way by which a man who cannot plead righteousness *before* God, may yet be able to plead a *righteousness of God*.

And this Gospel of deliverance from condemnation and from judgment, now for the first time preached, is yet witnessed to by the Law and the Prophets.

Verse 22. Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.

¹ Job xxxiii. 24.

² John v. 24.

What is now clearly revealed and plainly stated, is the persons to whom this righteousness belongs and upon whom its benefits devolve. '*The Lord knoweth them that are his,*'¹ the names and number of his elect are well known to *him*. But how may I know that *my* name is written in the Book of Life? that I am one of those chosen unto salvation?

The test is simple and plain. He that believeth on the '*Lord Jesus Christ . . . shall be saved,*'² and '*shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.*'³ The Apostle applied this test to the Philippian gaoler, and it instantly revealed the presence of divine grace in the man's heart, exactly in the same way as a chemical test, when duly applied, instantly reveals the presence of arsenic, or other concealed and unknown substance.

Hence it is that this righteousness is said to be *of* faith or *through* faith. It is not that a man having faith, thereby, and on account of the presence of this grace, merits or has acquired divine favour. Faith is but the ladder by which a man has, so to speak, climbed up, and obtained a view of his lot in the heavenly places—the glass, by which, and through which, he is enabled to see and apprehend that he is really and truly one of the elect, that his sins are forgiven—it is, like Bunyan's '*Roll,*' that which certifies him of the blessed fact that he is one of those who *has* passed from death unto life; that his calling and election are sure.

Faith is not a meritorious work. But true, genuine, divinely given faith, is ever followed by good works, and if these be absent, it is thereby shown and made evident, either that such faith as there is, is a dead faith, having no root or foundation, or that the Believer has forgotten the revelation made to him, that he was purged from his old sins.

And inasmuch as divine Election is not limited to any one family or nation, this '*righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ*' is the portion of all who believe, there being no difference between Jew and Gentile, between those who are the subjects of innumerable and clearly revealed promises, and those who are the subjects only of a few dark sayings and mystic prophecies.

Verse 23. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

As all have sinned and fallen short of infinite perfection, which is that in which God glories, and that by which God is glorified, all are on common ground in regard to sin, as they are also in regard to salvation—there is no difference.

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 19.² Acts xvi. 31.³ John v. 24.

Verse 24. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

And this because Justification, that is, acquittal from the charge of sin, is a free gift, for which there is nothing whatever given or due, in the shape of a *quid pro quo*, by man or from man. Its source and origin is the redemption price paid by Jesus Christ.

Verse 25. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.

The plan of salvation was devised by the Triune Jehovah before the world was—Jesus Christ having been *set forth*, or, as it is in the margin, *foreordained*, to be a propitiation for sinners—that is, it was ordained that *he* should take the sinner's place, and that the sinner should take *his*. This he did by becoming incarnate and suffering death on the cross. True, he rose from the dead, but this was because he was divine, and because the grave could not hold one who was without sin.

Those who are ordained to salvation are enabled, by the enlightening power of the Holy Ghost, to see and apprehend what his death means for them, and thus as it is said, through '*faith in his blood*,' they know themselves to be saved, and that they have eternal life. God's purpose in saving men, in this way, and by this plan, being to make it plain and apparent, that whilst he neither would nor could abate anything from his standard of what is right—from his infinitely perfect righteousness, yet that sin can be forgiven, and the punishment due to it remitted, without prejudice to his holiness. And, to allow this plan to be developed and carried into execution, God, who is slow to anger, plenteous in mercy, and not willing that any should perish, exercised and exercises forbearance, by not instantly cutting off and destroying those who break his law and rebel against his government.

Verse 26. To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Sin was allowed, for all-wise purposes, to abound, but grace was made to abound also—grace, as it were, overtaking and outstripping sin in the race. God sent his Son into the world to take upon himself man's nature, with its appointed inevitable ending—death. And in this sense he '*tasted death for every man*,'¹ he died, '*for (along with) the sins of the whole world*.'² Had he not been divine the matter would have ended there, but he being God as well as Man, could not perish everlastingly. When put to death as the result of sin, for he died at the hands of sinners, he came to man's appointed end, but, having life in himself, he rose again; and he having power also to give life, those chosen unto salvation rose with him, and those united to him by a living faith are still, and to the end will be, raised together with him.

Being made partakers of his divine and perfect nature, they have attaching to them, or, as the Scriptures put it, they have *imputed* to them, his perfection; for which cause they are said to have the righteousness '*which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*.'³ He becoming thus to them the end of the law for righteousness—that is, they are beyond the reach of the law—for the sentence of the law has been already executed upon them. They are, as it were, before coming to judgment, already dead, and the life they now have is a new life, derived from and sustained, through their union with Christ.

There is an end of any hope they may have once entertained of being able to attain to righteousness as the result of fulfilling the law, but, having now obtained a righteousness satisfying even divine requirements, they abandon any such vain hope, and rest wholly and solely in what Christ has done.

We do not now, or here, apprehend fully, on the contrary very feebly, the blessings conferred upon us, and the privileges belonging to us, as Believers—our '*life is hid with Christ in God*,'⁴ till he appear; then will it be revealed to us in all its fulness; but meanwhile the reality and existence of these blessings and privileges are no more affected by our blindness, ignorance, and forgetfulness than God's truth, as contained in the Scriptures, was affected by the unbelief and corruption of its custodians the Jews.

Verse 27. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? nay: but by the law of faith.

All this leaves no room for boasting. If works, if anything we could do or leave undone; effected or affected this divine life,

¹ Heb. ii. 9.

² 1 John ii. 2.

³ Phil. iii. 9.

⁴ Col. iii. 3.

something would depend upon works, and then there might be something for us to glory in; but, as it is merely and wholly a matter of believing in an already accomplished fact, there is no ground left for boasting—all we can do is to wonder and admire.

Verse 28. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

From all this it is apparent, and may surely be concluded, that Believers are justified, or acquitted, not on the ground of what they have done, or left undone, that is to say, not on the ground of works, but because they are partakers of the divine nature, and are made members, parts of, Christ's body—as is evidenced by the fact that they have been enabled to believe and apprehend that this is so.

Verse 29. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also.

What is there then which should make God the God of the Jew only and not equally the God of the Gentile?

Verse 30. Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith and the uncircumcision through faith.

For it is the *same God* who justifies, or acquits, both Jew and Gentile. It is on the *same ground* that both are justified, viz., because, begotten by the Holy Ghost, they are, by a vital union with Jesus Christ, made one with Him, and are '*safe in the arms of Jesus.*' It is, too, in the *same way* that both know and apprehend this, for both are '*saved by hope,*'¹ in the same promises and the same assurances.

Before Christ came, these promises and assurances were proclaimed in the ears, and before the eyes, of the Jews only, but the veil was torn down—this difference was done away with, when Christ Jesus commanded his disciples to '*go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*'²

¹ Rom. viii. 24.

² Mark xvi. 15.

Both are now on the same footing, although, jealous of the divine order of things, and careful that this should not be lost sight of, the Apostle speaks of the one as being saved *by*, of the other as being saved *through*, faith—this delicate distinction serving to emphasize the fact, which man is ever so ready to forget, and get into confusion about, that faith is not a meritorious grace, but a mere channel through which God communicates with man.

Verse 31. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Can it be said then that—in proclaiming these truths, and that salvation is by, or through, faith, and not by, or through, obedience to the requirements of the law, or in other words, that a man is saved by faith, without, apart from, the works of the law—any contradiction is offered to the Law given by Moses, or to its teaching? Nay, it is what was proclaimed by that Law—it confirms and establishes that which was contained in and revealed by that Law. But it sets the Law in its proper place, and gives it its proper proportions.

CHAPTER IV.

Verse 1. What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

Having, in the previous chapter, condemned and shaken to its foundations, the confidence of the Jew in his natural advantages, and his boasting on that account, the Apostle proceeds to deal with the founder of his nation, Abraham.

The Jew may say: the Apostle finds fault with *us*, as a nation, and makes out that we are not, because we are Jews, on that account the favourites of heaven—but what about Abraham? He at least was a good man, and on that account was blessed and made a blessing. Is it not, in so many words, said so? *'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee,'* you do this, and then, in return, and as a reward for your obedience, *'I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.'*¹

Abraham certainly was their father, according to the flesh, for every Jew was descended from, and came out of, Abraham, in the same way as every branch of the oak comes out of the acorn; and they, as his descendants, inherited special blessings and privileges, but those only which have previously been referred to—that is to say, the privilege of being custodians, exemplars, and the medium for conveying God's truth to the world. It was these blessings and privileges which were conferred upon Abraham and his seed by way of reward for his obedience, and not the blessings of salvation from sin and its consequences.

Verse 2. For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.

For if, on account of, or, as a *quid pro quo* for, his good works, he had obtained justification, a right to acquittal when charged with sin, this would have been put forward and recorded as the ground on which he had reason to glory. He *did* gain glory before men by his conduct, and *had* glory before God, but not on account of his conduct.

¹ Gen. xii. 1, 2.

Verse 3. For what saith the Scripture ? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

The Scriptures declare that his faith '*was counted unto him for righteousness*'; not that his faith was the meritorious ground of his justification, but that his justification was to be accounted for by his faith; that is to say, his faith was evidence that he was one of God's chosen and called ones. They declare, too, that his standing as a righteous man, and his enjoyment of the blessings which are the portion of those who are pronounced righteous ones, was to be accounted for by the fact that he believed God's revelation to him.

Verse 4. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

A man who is classed as a righteous man and receives '*the lot of the righteous*'¹ by way of reward, has earned his position by something he has done, and with such a man his standing is a matter of works—he receives that which is his due, and the reward is, and ought to be, proportioned to what he has done—the reward *then* is bestowed, not as an act of grace, but is the payment of a debt.

Verse 5. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

But a man who is ungodly, and is therefore not in a position to plead good works, if such a man is classed as a righteous man and receives the portion of the righteous, his justification must be accounted for by something to which he is no party, except in so far as he believes what has been revealed to him; and it is of such a man that it is said '*his faith is counted for righteousness.*'

¹ Ps. cxxv. 3 ; Dan. xii. 13.

Verse 6. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works. 7. Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. 8. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

*'The righteousness which is of God by faith,'*¹ as contrasted with *'the righteousness which is of the law,'*² was revealed to David in Old Testament days, and was preached by David when he referred to the blessedness of the man to whom righteousness is imputed by God; whose iniquities, on this ground, are forgiven, whose sins, on this ground, are covered, and to whom, on this ground, sin will not be imputed.

There are those, having a reputation for goodness, who in the eyes of their fellow men, and possibly in their own, too, are of unblemished character, who yet, by the perfect law of God, are under condemnation, and for whom, they being ignorant of the righteousness of God by faith, there is no way of escape from the damnation of hell.

How wretched is the condition of those having such a curse hanging over them!

The converse of this is what David describes as the *'blessedness of the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.'* Here, he says, is a man with no reputation for goodness, whose very appearance betrays his guilt, who in his own eyes, in the eyes of his fellow-men, and in the eye of the law, is a criminal.

And yet in the eyes of a holy God his iniquities are purged and therefore forgiven, and his sins covered. It is to him and to such as he that such things as these are said, *'He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob,'*³ *'thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged,'*⁴ *'behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee,'*⁵ *'thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back,'*⁶ *'thou wilt cast all their sins into the depth of the sea,'*⁷ *'what God hath cleansed, that call not thou common,'*⁸ *'when he had by himself purged our sins.'*⁹ God, the judge of all the earth, makes no charge against him, imputes no guilt to him, but instead charges him, as it were, with being a saint—*imputes* perfect innocence to him. How happy is the condition of such a man, of one on whom the blessing of God's righteousness has been bestowed!

¹ Phil. iii. 9.² Rom. x. 5.³ Num. xxiii. 21.⁴ Isaiah vi. 7.⁵ Zech. iii. 4.⁶ Isaiah xxxviii. 17.⁷ Micah vii. 19.⁸ Acts x. 15.⁹ Heb. i. 3.

Verse 9. Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also ? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.

Is the blessedness, as thus described, peculiar to the Jew, and not to be enjoyed by the Gentile ? Is this faith, which we say was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness, so reckoned to him as a Jew, and is it, for this reason, a blessing in which the Gentile can have no share ?

Verse 10. How was it then reckoned ? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision ? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.

A Jew is a man who is circumcised, a Gentile is a man who is uncircumcised, but *Abraham was not a Jew* when it was testified of him, '*and he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.*' It was in the year B.C. 1913 that this was said of him, and it was not till B. C. 1898, 15 years afterwards, that he was circumcised. It was on the day of the circumcision of Abraham that the Jewish era commenced. There was no such thing as a Jew before that, hence Abraham was not a Jew until after that date.

Circumcision was the seal of the contract, or covenant, made with the Jews, and that covenant related to their earthly privileges; it had no relation to, or at least was apart from, and outside of, what is afterwards spoken of as the new covenant.

In one sense this was no new covenant, for it had its origin before the world was made, in the counsels of the Triune Jehovah. A covenant, what in legal phraseology would be termed a preliminary contract, was signed, sealed, and delivered, under circumstances described in Genesis xv., whereby something of God's purposes was made known to Abraham, and which he through faith apprehended; but the great Deed of Covenant was drawn, so to speak, in eternity, although it was not executed, and thereby completed, until Christ came, and sealed it with his own blood.

Abraham was certified to be a righteous man, and as being a partaker in the blessings of this covenant, long before the

¹ Gen. xv. 6.

covenant, sealed by circumcision, was promulgated. That covenant, required of man an earthly righteousness. It made Abraham and his seed debtors to the law, as a condition of the gift and continuance of earthly privileges. As regards heavenly privileges and eternal blessedness, Abraham had already a heavenly righteousness.

Verse 11. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

For note in the first place that Abraham received circumcision, not as being of sacramental efficacy, but in token that the righteousness of which he had been made a partaker, was not against the law of good works.

Secondly, in undergoing the rite, he acknowledged the requirements of the law, and set his seal to it that there can be no justification except as the result of perfect obedience to the law.

Thirdly, yet inasmuch as he received circumcision after, and not before he was justified, it is shown that good works follow justification and do not precede it.

Fourthly, his circumcision made him the acknowledged head and father of the circumcised Jewish nation, and yet, inasmuch as he was a Believer before, and not after circumcision, he was, and still is, the head and father also of the whole '*household of faith*.'¹

Fifthly, had Abraham's justification followed his circumcision, where would the proof have been that the righteousness of God is '*imputed*' to Gentiles as well as to Jews?

Verse 12. And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

Yet again, inasmuch as he was the head and father of the whole Jewish nation, a vast number of whom were partakers only

¹ Gal. vi. 10.

of earthly privileges, had his justification followed his circumcision, it might have appeared that circumcision in the flesh *was* of sacramental efficacy, whereas, inasmuch as he was justified before he was circumcised, it is plain that those who lay claim to Abraham as their father must walk in his steps, that is, they must be partakers with Abraham of God's righteousness, or circumcision will only avail them as regards earthly privileges.

Verse 13. For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

The promises made to Abraham in the Old Testament, have been expounded and expanded in the New Testament, for there it is said, '*Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ,*'¹ '*an heir of God through Christ,*'² '*they shall inherit the earth,*'³ '*all things are your's; whether . . . things present, or things to come; all are your's,*'⁴ '*all that I have is thine.*'⁵

But these promises are made only to those who are by a vital union made one with Christ, '*for . . . all things were created by him, and for him,*'⁶ '*for thy pleasure they are and were created,*'⁷ '*behold I and the children which God hath given me*';⁸ they are made only to those who have the righteousness of faith which Abraham had before he was circumcised, and whose descent is not of Abraham according to the flesh, but of Abraham according to the spirit; that is, they are made to those who, as he was, are born of the Spirit.

Verse 14. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect.

There cannot be two heirs for the same inheritance—if, therefore, the natural descendants of Abraham—if only the circumcised, are heirs to the promises—the promise made to Abraham before circumcision, on the ground of his righteousness through faith, is voided and made of none effect, and the entail is cut off.

Verse 15. Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

¹ Rom. viii. 17. ² Gal. iv. 7. ³ Matt. v. 5. ⁴ 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.

⁵ Luke xv. 31. ⁶ Col. i. 16. ⁷ Rev. iv. 11. ⁸ Heb. ii. 13.

For the law promises nothing except to those who keep it—to these it promises favour and blessing, but, for those who fail to keep it, there is nothing but wrath. The promulgation of the law *as a means of justification*, had been a curse, and not a blessing, had not provision been made for it to be perfectly kept for men, although not by them. For after its requirements had been made clear, and the punishment of transgressors assured, there could be escape for none.

Verse 16. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.

Again the promise was to Abraham, before circumcision, so as to make it perfectly plain and clear that salvation is a matter of grace—a free gift—wholly independent of works, and also in order that those outside Jewish privileges, as well as those inside, might be able to appreciate and apprehend their right to participate in the promises.

Verse 17. (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

In the Scriptures are recorded many genealogical tables—family trees; each of these commences with the name of some individual.

The family tree of the Believer is not recorded on earth, but it lies before God. It has *many* branches, spreading themselves throughout many nations, but all may be traced back to one and the same source, the faith of Abraham, who is thus shown to be, as it was written of him, a father of many nations.

This family tree, moreover, could it be examined, would be found to show that every name recorded is that of one who was dead but has been made alive by divine generation, and, more

wonderful still, could it be examined, it would be found that every individual named in it was *chosen* unto everlasting life, and called by *his name*, before ever he came into existence.

Such things are too wonderful for the human mind to grasp. Though man's intellect moves in a large orbit and can explore regions which lie beyond the ken of his bodily senses, it cannot discover or even comprehend such things as these, but faith can, it can apprehend and explore all things that are revealed. '*The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever.*'¹

The Believer therefore knows far more concerning things that are past, and concerning that which is to come, than the wise man of this world. Abraham was a Believer, for it is said '*he believed God*'—he believed in him who quickeneth the dead, and calleth by their names those who are not yet born, as though they were already in existence.

Verse 18. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

And he was called to *walk* by faith, for though he had great hopes, and sure and certain hopes, he had little *but* hopes to depend upon, founded though they were upon the Word of God. His interests were almost wholly *reversionary* interests. Again and again his circumstances were such as to apparently exclude any possibility that the promises made to him would or could be fulfilled, and notably the promise that he should become the father of many nations, and that his descendants should be without number—how *could* this be, when he had no son?

Verse 19. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb.

At one period his faith was shaken, and although it did not give way it was *turned aside*. The time, since the promise was made seemed so long! the time, left for its fulfilment, was so

¹ Deut. xxix. 29.

short ! that he was led to question, at least its fulness and its *literal* fulfilment. So, casting about for some explanation, it occurred to him to provide for *himself* a way of escape—and if he could not get a legitimate heir, he would put up with an illegitimate one, through Hagar. But a righteous man, '*though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down.*'¹

God came to his aid, strengthened his weak faith, and led him again to go forward confident in both the power and will of God to fulfil his promise to the uttermost, notwithstanding the fact that in all human possibility the time was past in which he could have a child, owing to his own and his wife's advanced age; but '*sooner all nature shall change than one of God's promises fail.*'

And when, at length, God graciously appeared to him, renewed the promise, and *fixed a time for its fulfilment*, Abraham's spirit rose, his faith again became firm and clear, and, through the divine spirit, he was enabled to rejoice in that which was *to be*, as though it *were*, reflecting the divine glory, which was thus seen in him as the glory of the unseen sun is beheld in the rising moon.

Verse 20. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.

Nor was he daunted by the staggering command given him later on, to slay, with his own hands, his only son, but was ready to do the will of God even to this extent.

Verse 21. And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

Being fully assured that God could and would, all the same, fulfil the promise he had made that '*in Isaac shall thy seed be called.*'²

His earlier action in regard to Hagar had been the result of doubt as to *what the promise was*, rather than of doubt as to either God's ability or willingness to perform it. Now, the promise being clear and precise, and moreover a way having suggested itself to his mind by which God could fulfil the promise, there was no hesitation on his part in doing as he was commanded.

Verse 22. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.

¹ Ps. xxxvii. 24.

² Gen. xxi. 12.

Thus in a variety of ways Abraham was shown to have faith, and it is witnessed by God himself that he had it in regard to righteousness.

Faith is an abstract, not a concrete, entity. A man may believe what he sees, what he feels, what he hears, what he reads, what is signified to him by signs. The value of faith is its object. Faith is, so to speak, the electric fluid or wire by which the man and his objective are placed in communication.

Faith is said to have been '*imputed to Abraham for righteousness*,' because, by it, he arrived at a knowledge of God's sovereign love and eternal purposes, and it was the instrumentality also by which he was able to see and enjoy things that were not as though they were—to see himself righteous before God, although he had no righteousness of his own. It is not that righteousness was imputed, or ascribed, to Abraham *on account of* his faith, by way of reward, but that his faith revealed to him that he *had righteousness*, by way of grace and gift.

Verse 23. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him.

And Abraham's '*was not a singular case, the wonder is often renewed*.' This prophecy of Scripture, like others, being of no private interpretation.

Verse 24. But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.

'*The righteousness of God*' is assured and made known to all who have it, by their faith. Righteousness may safely and certainly be imputed, or ascribed, to all who have faith; it is in that they have faith that they are shown to be amongst the heirs of salvation. Faith is an indication of life; a man who has faith thereby gives evidence that he is a partaker of the divine nature—of His nature who raised up Jesus from the dead.

Verse 25. Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

For our offences were purged by his death, and our justification is assured by his resurrection—for he will be there to undertake our defence, and to plead his merits on our behalf.

CHAPTER V.

Verse 1. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peace with God. '*There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked,*'¹ '*God is angry with the wicked every day,*'² but we who by our faith are shown to be '*in Christ,*'³ and one with him, are of the number of those who are said to be '*justified by faith*'—our justification, or acquittal, being due, not to our having the grace of faith, not to any merits in us, not to any works of the Law done *by* us, but wholly to what has been done *for* us, by the Lord Jesus Christ.

The man who, although guilty, and conscious of his guilt, has a pardon in his pocket, has no fear of being brought to trial. And we to whom righteousness is imputed by God, and this on righteous grounds, are already at peace with God. We are no longer enemies; and we have a sense of security and confidence, arising from what has been revealed to us of God's gracious plans and purposes concerning us.

Verse 2. By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

And the results of this reconciliation, this being at peace with God, although mainly to be realized in eternity, are so also in time; for those who, by faith, know and realize themselves to be one with Christ, find that this fact has an effect on their present life, walk, and conversation—old things pass away, everything is changed, their tastes, their companions, their pursuits, and their ambitions—whilst their future is pregnant with joyful hopes.

Verse 3. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience.

¹ Isaiah lvii. 21.

² Ps. vii. 11.

³ 2 Cor. v. 17.

And not only so, but what before was bitter, is turned to sweetness; trials, instead of being groaned under, are rejoiced in. We can say with David, '*it is good for me that I have been afflicted,*'¹ '*before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.*'² We may go under for the moment, but we come up again and again. Tribulation is found not to disturb our *peace*. The storms of life ruffle and toss the surface, but there is stillness below—our trials are under our feet, and serve to strengthen and quicken. They do not weaken our hopes. Winter storms cause the roots of the oak to strike deeper and take a firmer hold, and so tribulation works patience.

Verse 4. And patience, experience; and experience, hope.

And in thus patiently waiting for the consummation of all things, we make a variety of discoveries. We come to see that our '*life is hid with Christ in God, beyond the reach of harm.*' We learn the vanity, emptiness, and desolation of this world, and yet that, as the darker the night the clearer shines the light, so the darker our lives the brighter become our hopes.

Verse 5. And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

And we go on to discover that what is to us such a source of joyful hope in the world to come, is something not to be ashamed of in this world. What! we say, '*Ashamed of him whom angels praise and all the host of heaven adore*'? Our acquaintance with, and assurance of, the love of God, expands our affections, broadens our sympathies, moulds and shapes our characters and tempers. We grow in grace, as a young man grows into a man of matured appearance and settled character. We become in measure filled with the Holy Ghost. He dwells in the secret and hidden places of our being, and, we find, has come to stay.

The varied trials met with by the Believer in his christian course serve a variety of purposes.

¹ Ps. cxix. 71.

² Ps. cxix. 67.

Having been told at starting, that '*straight and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life,*' and that '*it is through much tribulation he must enter the Kingdom,*' the fact of meeting with difficulties, trials, and distresses, is an evidence to him that the road he is on is the right one.

'Why should I complain of want or distress,
Temptation or pain?—he told me no less;
The heirs of salvation, I know from his word,
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord.'

He finds, as the result of his trials, that while the fervour and enthusiasm of first love has cooled and moderated, or seem perhaps to have passed away, yet that, as time goes on, the seal of the Holy Ghost is becoming more clear and better defined, both on his heart and life.

Again, he learns, as the result of his trials, that the soil and atmosphere in which, as a tree of God's planting, he finds himself, are favourable to growth, and especially to root growth.

He comes to recognize that the regenerate soul is like a block of marble which, if it is to exhibit and embody the perfections of the sculptor's genius, must be hewn, chiselled, shaped, and fashioned, before it can become a monument of the sculptor's creative power.

That it is like clay, which must be ground into powder, and moulded on the potter's wheel, if it is to come forth perfect, in its appointed form and shape.

That if he is to be sanctified he must be passed through the furnace of affliction, in order that, like gold tried in the fire, which by this means is purged and purified from the dross with which it is mixed, he, too, may be both tested and purified.

All these experiences are *dealings of the Lord*, and make it evident to him that he is not only in, but under, God's hand, and if he '*wait patiently*'¹ for the Lord, while he is, by God's providential dispensations, being thus dealt with, he will find, that gradually, the love of God is shed abroad in his heart.

Verse 6. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

There was a time when we were of the number of the ungodly, and there was nothing without, and nothing within, to indicate, either to others or to ourselves, that we were of the number of the Elect, and yet we were—we were even then parties

¹ Ps. xxxvii. 7.

to that covenant which, drawn in eternity, was, on the day appointed for settling the great transaction, duly signed, sealed, and delivered, in the sight of all men, by the death, burial, and resurrection of the Son of God.

Verse 7. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

Human love and Divine love are set one against the other in this and the next verse, divine inspiration condescending to treat man as a reasonable being, capable of forming opinions and of making deductions from facts laid before him, '*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord.*'¹

Human love, in its lowest developments, has its rise in the character of its object—it is originated and drawn out by congruity, by pity, by gratitude, by admiration. It is rarely, indeed, that such feelings carry a man so far as to induce him to die for another, although there are cases in which a man will voluntarily and deliberately sacrifice his life on behalf of one whom he has reason to love, to admire, or be grateful to.

Human love in its *highest* developments is more akin to divine love, although even then falling infinitely short of it. Maternal love, for instance, is not dependent on the character of its object. A mother loves her child in spite of ugliness, deformity, ingratitude, and even depravity, but even such love has its limits. '*Can a woman forget her sucking child? . . . yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.*'²

Verse 8. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Here divine love is contrasted with human love, and God commends to our attention and consideration the character of his love toward us. It was not originated by, and is not dependent on, the character of its object. God loves those who are his own, and because they are his own,³ in the same way as a mother loves her child, because it is her own.

But God's love is boundless, *it* has no limits—it is eternal in its beginning and eternal in its duration; nor is it changed or abated by our sinfulness, filthiness, depravity, or rebellion. On the contrary it was intensified to such an extent by the deplorable

¹ Isaiah i. 18.

² Isaiah xlix. 15.

³ Deut. vii. 7, 8.

condition to which man was (in divine foreknowledge) reduced by sin, that God would not even allow his attribute of infinite *Justice* to stand in the way of his attribute of infinite *Love*, but met the demands of the eternal law of holiness by the sacrifice of his own Son—thus clearing out of the way what must otherwise have been an impassable barrier to the exercise of his love, but which taken away, brought to light the existence of an otherwise unknown and undiscovered attribute of the divine character, that of Infinite *Mercy*.

Verse 9. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

Is it to be supposed that Infinite Love, which before the world was, chose us unto salvation, and which '*by his blood,*' that is, by the sacrifice of himself, cleared away that which otherwise would have rendered impossible the exercise of his love, will leave its work half done, or accept defeat at the hands of either created angels or created men—that Infinite Power will suffer those he has made his own to be plucked out of his hand, or Satan the accuser of the brethren to call down divine wrath upon the objects of divine love, so, as it were, to compel the Judge of all the earth to condemn and consign to everlasting damnation his own children, those begotten of the Holy Ghost?

They that are '*begotten of God*'¹ bring forth '*the fruit of the Spirit,*'² of the *Spirit of Christ* that is in them.'³ They are made *partakers of the divine nature,*'⁴ of that nature which cannot commit sin, for it *is born of God,*'⁵ and is therefore proof against failure. God keeps his own, and '*that wicked one toucheth them not,*'⁶ their '*life is hid with Christ in God.*'⁷ And this is so to such an extent that, although while yet in the flesh my fleshly nature will continue to assert itself, my offences against the law do not touch my righteousness, for it is not mine but God's righteousness, and it is no more I that sin, '*but sin that dwelleth in me.*'⁸ '*He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet,*'⁹ '*if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,*'¹⁰ '*the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin,*'¹¹ original sin and overt acts of sin. He '*is clean every whit.*'¹²

Verse 10. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

¹ John v. 18.² Gal. v. 22.³ 1 Peter i. 11.⁴ 2 Peter i. 4.⁵ 1 John iii. 9.⁶ 1 John v. 18.⁷ Col. iii. 3.⁸ Rom. vii. 17.⁹ John xiii. 10.¹⁰ 1 John i. 9.¹¹ 1 John i. 7.¹² John xiii. 10.

If the love, the wisdom, and the power of God could devise no plan for the putting away of sin, and therefore of reconciling God and Man, short of the death of his Son, can it be supposed—this tremendous difficulty having been disposed of—that the risen Saviour, to whom all power is given in heaven and earth, cannot and will not find a way and means whereby to complete the work he has begun ?

‘ His love in time past forbids me to think
He will leave me at last, in trouble to sink;
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
Confirms his good pleasure to carry me through.
‘ Determined to save, he watch’d o’er my path,
When, Satan’s blind slave, I sported with death;
And can he have taught me to trust in his name,
And thus far have brought me, to put me to shame?’

Verse 11. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

And further, cannot he, who has thus shown himself to be infinitely able and infinitely willing, cannot he find a means of making known to his Elect, in Time, something of the glories and blessedness obtained and laid up in store for them in Eternity—cannot he who made the ear make man to hear ? and has he not done so by his Spirit and by his Word, and is it not for this reason that Believers are enabled, here and now, to joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ ?

Verse 12. Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

Surely Peter must have had the Epistle to the Romans, and verses 12 to 21 of this chapter, specially in his mind when he wrote, ‘ *even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*’¹

The verses are certainly a tangled skein, the unravelling of which demands both time and patience, and it is not always easy to find an end to begin with. They are like a puzzle, with many

pieces, of divers shapes and dimensions, and how to fit each piece into its proper place and make the whole complete is not easy to see.

They are like a strong room with seven locks, containing many precious things. But it is too strong to be forced, and cannot be opened in the absence of its seven keys, but here they are, and they must be kept at hand whilst the attempt is made to open up these difficult verses.

I. The greatest of events and issues have trivial and minute beginnings.

II. Heredity is a law of nature—that is to say, a man as certainly partakes, more or less, of what his ancestors were, as present events are shaped and coloured by what has happened in the past.

III. Good comes out of evil. '*All things work together for good,*' etc.¹ '*Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die,*' etc.²

IV. While God sees the end from the beginning,³ while all things, past present and future, are open to him, man's vision is very restricted and limited, nor is it possible for him to grasp and take in, a number and complication of things, in all their bearings and proper proportions, at one time. '*These are parts of his ways.*'⁴

V. There is much which can only be understood and apprehended, when fully developed and perfectly matured, hence the necessity for allowing things to run their course, even to the bitter end.

VI. We have to reckon with the *uncovenanted* mercies of God, such as those which are bestowed on the Gentiles, as well as with his *covenanted* mercies, such as those bestowed on the Jews, or, in other words, the mercies of God are partly revealed and partly unrevealed.

VII. The Divine Being is infinitely perfect in all his attributes. '*Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.*'⁵

But to proceed. It has to be borne in mind that the Apostle is here dealing, not with *sins*, but with *sin*. All men will be tried on two counts, for sin and for sins. The one count being whether they are in Adam and therefore members of an unrighteous race; or in Christ, and therefore have God's righteousness, being members of Christ's body, and being partakers of his holiness. The other count being, what overt acts of wilful sin they have been guilty of.

Those who are found to be yet in Adam, must be consigned to everlasting damnation, for his angels '*shall gather out of his*

¹Rom. viii. 28. ²John xii. 24. ³Rev. i. 8. ⁴Job xxvi. 14. ⁵Hab. i. 13.

*kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.'*¹

Those who are found to be '*in Christ*' will go into everlasting life, being heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

But all will have to give account of overt acts of wilful sin. '*We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.'*²

'*That servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. . . .*

'*He that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.'*³

'*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'*⁴ '*The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth . . . from all sin.'*⁵

The Apostle digresses in these verses from the line he was upon previously, and, leaving the more personal aspect of the question, proceeds to discourse upon what may be called, race doctrine, or as theologians term it, the doctrine of the natural depravity of the human heart.

The existence of every man upon earth is traceable back to Adam, and every individual of the human species came out of Adam, in the same way as every branch and every leaf of the oak comes out of the acorn. As there are varieties in the oak, so there are varieties and diversities in mankind, but each individual has the characteristics and propensities of Adam, the ancestor whence all sprang, in the same way that all oaks, notwithstanding their variety, are yet oaks, and have the special characteristics of the oak from which they all originally sprang.

Had there been two Adams, there would have been two races of men, and had one Adam been *sinless* as the other was *sinful*, there might have been a *sinless* race of men, as well as a *sinful* one.

We may question and cavil as to the wisdom, the equity, and the fitness of the doctrine of heredity, although we do not find fault because all oak trees, apple trees, and so on, are now, in their nature, exactly what the first of their species was, but the fact remains that what the first original man was, such his issue is, and will be.

Sin, is therefore in all men, because all men are descended from Adam, into whom the bacillus of sin entered and whose nature thereby became tainted with sin; and death, the fruit of sin, has become the lot of all, not because of the number and

¹Matt. xiii. 41-42.

²Cor. v. 10.

³Luke xii. 47-48.

⁴1 John i. 9.

⁵1 John i. 7.

character of their individual sins, but because they are members of a race which is sinful, and which, as a consequence, is doomed to die.

Verse 13. (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

And that sin and death have their rise in the nature in which man is born, and not in the overt acts of each individual, is proved by the fact that both sin and death were in the world before the Law was given, and therefore before any breach of *it* could have been committed; and how can law-breaking be imputed, or charged, in the absence of any law?

Verse 14. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

And yet death has claimed as its subjects every soul which has come into existence from Adam down to the time of Moses, including not only Adam himself, whose sin *was* an overt act, a deliberate breach of one (only) plain command, clearly stated, and perfectly well known to him, but the multitude of others, his descendants, who were all in greater or less ignorance as to the difference between right and wrong, whilst, too, it was not one, but many points in which they could offend.

The sin of Adam's descendants was therefore of a very different character from Adam's sin; it was not after the similitude of Adam's transgression—they had less light—their temptations were vastly more numerous, and it might be argued that they had far greater excuse; and yet none were exempted from death, the penalty of sin, not even those whom we term innocent babes; death passed upon all.

Adam, then, was the originating source of sin and death in the *world*, as he who was to come, Christ Jesus, is the originating source of righteousness and life in the *Church*; and those born of Adam can no more bring forth works of righteousness, than the fig tree can bear olive berries or the vine figs;¹ whilst those born of Christ, the second Adam, will bring forth the works of righteousness, as certainly as the fig tree bears figs, and the olive tree olive berries.

But, it may be said, how can this be reconciled with the fact that both these natures are in the same man? '*Can a fountain yield both salt water and fresh?*'¹—but one thing at a time; this

¹James iii. 12.

is a case of parallel truths, and the one truth is not to be denied and thrown aside because it does not *appear* to be reconcilable with the other. The difficulty, moreover, is dealt with by the Apostle later on, as will be found as we proceed, but it is important to get a firm grasp of each separate truth before attempting to contemplate all of them as a whole.

Although all might, none necessarily need, and few do, in this life, see or apprehend the things which, nevertheless, God has revealed by his Spirit.¹ So gross is the darkness, and so thick are the mists, of time and sense.

‘ Father, I wait thy daily will,
Thou shalt divide my portion still;
Grant me on earth what seems thee best,
Till death and heaven reveal the rest.’

Verse 15. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

The offence the Apostle speaks of was Adam’s transgression in the Garden of Eden in eating the forbidden fruit, that one act of disobedience of a created being. From that small beginning followed the ruin of a race. Thus the smallest possible modicum of imperfection is seen to have destroyed man’s own righteousness, so that he no longer had, or could have, a righteousness of his own; and on this account the human race, as originally created, is shut out for ever from the presence of an infinitely perfect God.

The free gift spoken of is the ‘*gift of righteousness*’ (see verse 17), the righteousness of Christ, God’s righteousness, as it is variously termed. It had its rise, not in one or many acts of obedience, but in an impossibility of disobedience on the part, not of a created being, but of one divine. God in his infinite grace gave up (hence its title *gift of righteousness*) his only begotten Son, for the purpose of starting a new race on earth, and, from this small beginning also, what stupendous results have followed.

If all connected with Adam by generation are partakers of his sinful nature, all connected with Christ by generation, that is, those begotten of the Holy Ghost, are also made partakers of *his* nature.

Had Adam on the first occasion not yielded to the tempter, would there have been any security that he would not do so at some future time?

Had others started unconnected with Adam, and had they continued perfectly righteous for a time, what security would there have been for a continuance of this righteousness to all eternity?

The result therefore would have been the same had there been myriads of Adams, instead of one Adam with myriads as his posterity, because each created being, if left as Adam was to his own resources, in even one point, would have been found unable to stand alone.

But the righteousness of God is proof against all possibility of failure, for all time, and to all eternity.

Here, then, is one respect in which '*not as the offence so also is the free gift*'—the glory of the one puts the other into the shade; though the sun does not extinguish the lamp, the light of the lamp is no longer *seen* in the light of the sun.

But what about the many who through the offence of one are dead, cut off from God? This terrible thought indisposes even the Believer to dwell upon or to look into the glorious things which are laid up for the Lord's people, and which are revealed to them by his Spirit. His tender and loving spirit, impressed less by sin itself, than by the consequences of sin, is shocked at the suggestion that any *man* can be lost for ever. That a fallen angel can be so it does not perhaps occur to him to doubt!

But is this reasonable? We do not refuse to enjoy comforts or to partake of luxuries, because we are surrounded by those who are in want of all things. We may desire and seek to share these good things with others, but it is folly to refuse credence to what has been thus revealed, to decline to have anything to do with such things, because others cannot share them, this is tantamount to charging against him who bestows them that he is unequal in his ways. But are we in a position, have we sufficient knowledge of all the facts of the case, to be able thus to pass judgment upon the ways and dealings of the Most High?

Let us rather look into what is so clearly revealed to ourselves, and to the blessings which are the undoubted portion of the elect, and leave the secret things to the uncovenanted mercies of God, to be dealt with when, and as, he sees fit, who is perfect in all his ways, and who doeth all things well.

Contrast then with the fact that through the offence of *one* many are dead, the results which have arisen out of this awful calamity, and consider the many, on the other hand, who, instead of having a frail and uncertain title to happiness, have, through God's gracious gift of his only begotten Son, obtained

everlasting blessedness, and have it secured to them by an indefeasible and inalienable title.

Verse 16. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.

Verse 15 has regard to the *offence*; Verse 16 to the *offender*. Adam, the offender, was judged and condemned for one offence, and that of a comparatively trivial character; Divine Holiness thereby declaring the necessity for dealing with sin in its very first beginnings—a necessity which was emphasized and confirmed by God's subsequent action in allowing sin to run its course, thereby demonstrating what awful consequences must result from even the slightest departure from perfect righteousness.

The free gift of God to mankind was of one perfectly obedient, and having an inherent righteousness of his own—a righteousness which is transmitted by him to those begotten of the Holy Ghost, and whereby offences, however great in number, and however great in character, are '*put away*.' Hence while that which resulted from the one that sinned is awfully dreadful, that which resulted from the One that was without sin is still more awfully glorious.

Verse 17. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

Death resulted from that one offence, and death has ever since reigned rampant in the world, claiming as its subjects every son of Adam; but life has resulted from the gift of an infinitely perfect Saviour; and Christ Jesus claims as his subjects all who are born of the Spirit. They are heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ, and will reign with him for ever and ever. Because he lives they live, and while he lives they will live.

Verse 18. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

Hence if, by the offence of one man, all born of him come under the law of God, and by it are condemned to die, yet, by the sinless righteousness of one Man, all born of him are free from the law ('*Oh, happy condition*'), and on this account cannot die. They have a *title* to life.

Verse 19. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Thus there are two distinct races in the world. Those belonging to the one, through the disobedience of their first progenitor, proved to be the descendants of one capable of sin. The other, through the obedience unto death of *their* first progenitor, proved to be the descendants of one incapable of sin.

Verse 20. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

The law with all its terrors, passive and active, was promulgated not for purposes of punishment, retaliation, retributive justice—not to make sins abound, but to make the sinfulness of sin abundantly clear. But while this object was being effected, the grace of God was at the same time made still more plain, and it was shown that Love outshone Justice.

Verse 21. That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

And it was shown, too, that if sin claims its subjects and condemns them to eternal destruction, righteousness claims its subjects too, and becomes to them a glorious life which, through Jesus Christ our Lord, will endure to all eternity.

CHAPTER VI.

Verse 1. What shall we say then ? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound ?

Seeing that the result of the introduction of sin into the world and its subsequent developments, has been to magnify (make men and angels see as through a magnifying glass) the grace of God, what is to be inferred from this?

Can it be argued that we should continue in sin that God's grace may be still further magnified? Shall we presume to say that we are taking a leaf out of God's book, and using the same means to accomplish our object as he does, if we justify the doing of evil in order that good may come?

Verse 2. God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein ?

Such a thought is not for one moment to be harboured in the mind. How can we who are born of the Spirit of God and thereby made partakers of the divine nature, and therefore as much separated from sin as the spirit of one dead is from his body, how can we live in sin, or to sin?

Verse 3. Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death ?

It has to be remembered and ever kept in mind that those who are born of the Spirit and baptized by the Holy Ghost, are thereby united to Jesus Christ, and made one with Him, who is without sin, who utterly abhors the very thought of sin, who is holy, harmless, and undefiled, and who died for, and to put away, sin—in order that we, like him, might be '*perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.*'¹

¹Matt. v. 48.

Verse 4. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

And if we, by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, are made one with Christ who died, we are made one, too, with the Christ who was buried.

Burial is an evidence of actual death: only those who are undeniably dead are buried. The sealing of our Lord's tomb by Pilate, was a formal certification to the Jews that he was really dead; and if we fully believe, we shall apprehend what is the fact, that we, that is, the '*old man*' in us, really and truly died when Christ died; the baptism of the Holy Ghost being the sign of this to ourselves—as water baptism was instituted as the outward and visible sign to our fellow-men, of the same inward spiritual grace.

And if we are one with the Christ who was buried, we are one with the Christ who, '*sown in dishonour, was raised in glory, who, sown in weakness, was raised in power, whose body of humiliation was sown a natural body but was raised a spiritual body.*'¹

And being one with the risen Christ, we are called to walk as he walked '*who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth,*'² who, although he ate with publicans and sinners,³ and '*endured such contradiction of sinners,*'⁴ was yet '*separate from sinners.*'⁵

Verse 5. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.

All Believers are trees of the Lord's planting—that is, their union with Christ was a matter that was arranged in the divine counsels before the world began, although the fact is made known to them only little by little, at sundry times and in divers manners.

It was as bearing upon this union with Christ that God, by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah, proclaimed himself as '*the Lord of hosts, that PLANTED thee,*'⁶ and who by the prophet Ezekiel said, '*he took . . . of the seed . . . and PLANTED it,*'⁷ these words being addressed, as are earthly proclamations, *to all to whom it may concern.*

¹1 Cor. xv. 43-44. ²1 Peter ii. 22. ³Matt. ix. 11. ⁴Heb. xii. 3.

⁵Heb. vii. 26. ⁶Jer. xi. 17. ⁷Ezek. xvii. 5.

As the same seed produces plants of the same kind, so those begotten of the Holy Ghost bear a likeness to God's only begotten Son. As he was born into the world, and departed from it by the gateway of death, so do they; as he passed to glory by way of the tomb, so do they; as he emerged from the tomb on his way to everlasting glory, so will they.

Verse 6. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

And his purpose in subjecting himself to death was that by so doing he might destroy our '*old man*,' that is, that he might bring human nature as derived from Adam, to an end. When the Son of God was nailed to the cross, *it* was crucified with him. When the Son of God gave up the ghost, *it* was left behind on the cross. '*He took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.*'¹ The husband and the wife, to use the Apostle's illustration (see next chapter) were there separated by death, and parted company for ever.

How, then, can we who are partakers of that divine nature in virtue of which he rose from the dead, how can we any longer serve sin?

Verse 7. For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Man's connection with sin was broken off at the cross—the chains by which sin before held the Believer in its fetters, were knocked off by his union with Christ, and he was thereby set free from its thralldom.

Verse 8. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.

Now our hopes of living with Christ are grounded on his death, and if we did not die with him, the ground for expecting that we shall live with him is gone. On the other hand, if our natural man did die with him, '*the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God*,'² it is a new life.

¹Col. ii. 14.

²Gal. ii. 20.

Verse 9. Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

Christ Jesus died for sin once, but he will never do so again. *'There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins ;'*¹ death is for him a stricken foe.

Verse 10. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

By his death he made an end of sin, and he now proclaims himself to be *'he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.'*²

Verse 11. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And we in the same way are to base our calculations on these revealed facts. Do we use a series of numbers as the basis for addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and all our arithmetical reckonings, so are we to make use of these revealed truths, in working out the problems of time and eternity, and thereby, by exact and deliberate computation, to arrive at the result that we too, in and through Christ Jesus, are dead to sin but alive to God.

Verse 12. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

Weeds grow of themselves, but plants need care and cultivation if they are to flourish. All our members need to be kept under the control of our new life. We are to be like *'a shop opened under new management.'* If we forget or become beclouded as to our standing in Christ, we give occasion to sin to resume its sway over us.

¹Heb. x. 26.

²Rev. i. 18.

Verse 13. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

We are still in the body, and if any one of our members is allowed to throw off the yoke, it is like the opening of the wicket by Parley the porter; the whole band of robbers rush in;—if one member sin and suffer, all the rest suffer with it;—if our eyes, ears, tongues, feet, and hands are unoccupied, or occupied in unrighteous ways,—freed though we may yet be from the final dominion of sin in eternity, we shall yet suffer its pains and penalties in time; but if our members be occupied with God and in his service, we shall be like those in a fortress, with all its gates closed against the enemy.

Verse 14. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Then sin will have no power over us. Then shall we be witnesses to the triumph of grace over law, and show that although sin is still in the world, and we also—although conflict, strife, and warring still go on, yet that victory over sin rests with the Believer, who although he has no righteousness of his own, although he cannot make his boast in the Law, saying, I have kept the law and therefore live, yet he has through grace that within him which brings forth fruits of righteousness.

Verse 15. What then ? shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace ? God forbid.

The Apostle speaks with no uncertain sound when he says, '*We are not under the law,*' and he does not fear to put the matter boldly; he is not afraid of the truth, notwithstanding that it is a doctrine which may, by carnal minds, be easily perverted and wrested to their own destruction;—but he proceeds to indicate the marks by which *genuine* grace may be distinguished from *counterfeit* grace.

Those who are truly and really under the influence of that gracious spirit whereby they have been begotten, will, as the Apostle does, repel with energy the suggestion that a Believer may break the law with impunity.

Verse 16. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey ; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness ?

Genuine Believers will see, feel, and acknowledge, that what the Apostle says is true—outward acts are a sure indication of the inward condition. The man who breaks any one of the Commandments thereby gives evidence that he is acting in obedience to, and is, for the time being at least, under the orders of, that *fleshly nature*, the remains of which, while man is in the transition period, in the chrysalis stage (see next chapter) still hampers his spiritual nature. On the other hand, the man who delights in the law of God, and as a habit lives in accordance with its requirements, gives evidence that he is acting in obedience to, and is under the orders of, *his spiritual nature*.

Verse 17. But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

But in thus presenting before them the objections which may be raised to the doctrine that '*we are not under the law*,' and this for the purpose of showing how such objections may be met, the Apostle is thankful to believe that those to whom he is writing are genuine believers, for they have both received the doctrine, and by their obedience shown, that they are no longer acting under the orders of their carnal nature.

Verse 18. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

As a man may occasionally do service for one whose slave and servant he no longer is, so a Believer may occasionally sin ;

but he who is regenerate is no longer a member of Satan's household, he is set free from the service of his former master, and has entered the service of a new master.

The Apostle reminds them of their experience when first it was shown to them that their carnal nature was nailed to the cross, and that they were therefore set free from its dominion—how they revelled in their freedom, and delighted in works of righteousness.

Verse 19. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

Whilst he does not justify any falling away from this happy condition of '*the end of the law for righteousness*,'¹ he cannot but see evidence that, through the infirmities of the flesh, they are not as full of joy as they were.

He proceeds therefore to remind them of the readiness with which their eyes, ears, tongues, hands, and feet, were formerly devoted to all kinds of *evil* works, with the result that they went from bad to worse, growing in evil, and in the knowledge of sin.

And he goes on to exhort them now to a like diligent devotion of all their members to *good works*, which will be no less helpful and conducive, to growth in grace and holiness.

Nothing, too, is so conducive to clear views of truth as godly living, and *vice versa*. '*If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine.*'²

Verse 20. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

He goes on to remind them that while, in an unregenerate condition they may have done some, or even many, good works, and thus, as it were, done occasional and temporary service to one who was not then their Master, yet they were at that time none the less members of Satan's household, and not of God's, even the good works they did having been dragged out of them by some passing or selfish motive.

¹Rom. x. 4.

²John vii. 17.

Verse 21. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed ? for the end of those things is death.

And what was the then present result to them of the service they were in—to say nothing of its future consequences?

Verse 22. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

And what is not the present result to those who have exchanged the service of Satan for the service of God, to say nothing of the everlasting blessedness to follow ?

Verse 23. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Death is the everlasting portion of the Unbeliever. It is the wages appointed to be paid to those who sin—they will get what they have worked for—they will reap what they have sown.

Eternal life is the everlasting portion of the Believer; it is not the wages paid for good works, but the gift of God to those who are vitally united to His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

CHAPTER VII.

Verse 1. Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth ?

The reference by the Apostle in the previous chapter (vi. 8) to being '*dead with Christ*,' was well calculated to perplex and mystify those to whom he wrote, who were and knew themselves to be as much *alive* as ever.

The Apostle was, however, speaking of course not of carnal things, but of spiritual; for Believers, although through and in Christ delivered as regards their *souls* from the consequences and final dominion of sin, and therefore said to be dead, as indeed they really are as regards the *soul* with which they were born, yet as regards their *spirits*, they are as much alive as ever, and so long as these spirits are enclosed and attached to the body, they are, and will be, as much alive as ever to temptation, to pain, to sorrow, and to all the present effects and consequences of sin.

This death of the soul is a spiritual fact revealed by the Word of God, and when revealed to us individually by the Spirit—in other words, when it is given to us to believe the divine testimony, '*ye are dead*,' we understand what is meant by being born again—what it is to be begotten of the Holy Ghost.

The Apostle proceeds to develop and elucidate the subject, and to throw light on this mysterious truth, this strange doctrine, and also on what he in the previous chapter deduced from it, viz., that '*ye (who are dead) are not under the law*.'

Verse 2. For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

And he does this by calling to his aid an illustration from daily life, showing how, in the case of a man and his wife, they are both under the law so long as they live; the marriage law has a hold upon them while united, but this ceases immediately upon the death of either.

Verse 3. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

He seems to see in the husband the man's soul, in the wife the man's spirit.

The soul, being the nature derived from Adam with which man is born into the world, the *latent* element in life; the bent of mind, those propensities, which left to themselves, naturally, inevitably, and invariably, lead him to sin, to evil, and to corruption.

The spirit being that living power, the executive, the *active principle* in life, which carries into effect, obeys the behests of the soul, which, as conscience or judgment, discerns, weighs, re-proves, consoles—man's '*better half*' it might almost be called.

The man may die and yet the woman live, and in such case she is free from the marriage law, and she may, without being amenable to it, marry another man, for how can a dead man find fault with, or call in the aid of the law against, a living woman? And this is so from the moment of her husband's death, although his body be as yet but on its way to destruction, in its coffin—awaiting burial.

Those who believe the divine testimony '*ye are dead,*' feel and ought to feel like a woman with a bad husband, who is told, '*he is dead*'; and as such a woman will feel when in due time she realizes that she is married again, but to a good husband.

Verse 4. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.

The original soul of the converted man—the husband—the natural man who is under the law, over whom the law has control, saying, '*do this and thou shalt live,*' and again, '*the soul that sinneth it shall die,*' or again, '*he that offendeth in one point is guilty of all,*' this natural man (the husband) is, in the case of a Believer, already dead, although his spirit (the wife) still lives. His Adam nature, his *soul*, died with Christ, when Christ died;

but his *spirit* is married to Christ, who rose from the dead, and it now lives to Christ and for him.

By the mysterious operations of the Holy Ghost, when he believed he was born again, he passed from death unto life, passed out of his old condition into a new condition, became a new creature in Christ Jesus.

It is the first realization (by faith) of the truth, '*ye are born again*,' Christ has entered into you, which gives the Believer his first experience of the joys of salvation, which makes him *in love with Christ*, and it is the continued realization, spite of all obstacles, of the same truths, '*ye are dead*,' '*Christ in you the hope of glory*,' which establishes, strengthens, settles.

And yet the Believer's own original spirit still lives—but it is now united, and owns allegiance, to a something which cannot sin, for it is born of God. It is now the calling of his spirit to carry into effect, to obey, the behests of a soul which is one with Christ Jesus. It is now his spirit's joy and delight to be a fellow-labourer with God in the carrying out of his plans and purposes, to be occupied with its Beloved in discerning his beauties, in weighing and judging his merits—it rests in his love, rejoices in his wisdom and power, and delights to have God's secret things discovered to it.

By this figure of husband and wife it is shown that man is a complex being, made up of soul and spirit as well as of body; and this is confirmed by other Scriptures, as for example, '*I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless*,'¹ '*fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body*'² (not spirit), '*thou wilt not leave my soul in hell*,'³ '*God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul*,'⁴ '*the spirit of man that goeth upward*.'⁵

By this figure, too, some light is thrown upon the strange experiences of the Believer, and on the workings of the flesh and of the spirit, on the *old man* and the *new man*—on the difference between being *carnally minded* and *spiritually minded*. (See Col. iii. 9, 10; Eph. iv. 22-24; John iii. 6; Romans viii. 6.)

Some further light may be thrown on this subject, too, by bearing in mind, that passing from death unto life, is the passing from one condition to another condition, and that the passage from the one to the other is not necessarily, and indeed is rarely, if ever, instantaneously effected.

The worm is changed into a butterfly, it passes from one condition to another, but by stages. The first of these is death; *quâ* worm it is clearly already dead, but although this is so, and it has as certainly already entered upon a new life, the chrysalis condition has to be gone through.

¹1 Thess. v. 23.

²2 Matt. x. 28.

³3 Psalm xvi. 10.

⁴4 Gen. ii. 7.

⁵5 Eccles. iii. 21.

The chrysalis stage doubtless begins with the implantation of the germ of a new life which has for a time to struggle with the old, and, even after its death, with the remains of decay and corruption, but eventually it emerges victorious, throws off its vile body, and mounts aloft, a fully developed butterfly, no longer condemned to crawl and creep upon the earth, but equipped for a new and glorified existence.

Verse 5. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

Before we were partakers of the new birth, we were continually at cross purposes with the Divine Being. His law is inflexible, it must be obeyed, or the appointed consequences must follow, hence the law meant to us punishment and death.

Verse 6. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

But now, our spirit being united to a soul which is at one with the Divine Being (the soul with which we were born being dead, crucified with Christ), our spirits delight to obey its behests, to carry out its inspirations. We no longer weigh and consider, reproach and reprove ourselves, we no longer live in fear, but we delight to serve the Lord. *'Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord.'*¹ We are delivered from the spirit of bondage, which requires us, to do this that we may live, not to do this or we shall die; the old nature has passed away, the new is of one mind with God; we delight to do his will, we love to walk with him, we walk in love.

Verse 7. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

¹Psalm cxxiii. 2.

But does it follow from this that the law is faulty or that it is done away with? By no manner of means. What the written law has done has been to bring into bold relief, and it still does so, the infinite perfections and requirements of divine holiness, and to make us experimentally acquainted with them. There is all the difference between man's ability to apprehend divine holiness before the giving of the law and since, that there is between music without words and music with words. The spirit of the song is in the music itself, but it is the words which give form, shape and sharply defined outline to that spirit. The music of the National Anthem or of '*Home, Sweet Home*' is most impressive without the words, but how infinitely more so when accompanied by the words.

There is, now, nothing hazy or misty about right or wrong, the line of truth is clear, sharp, and well defined. This has been brought about by the giving of the law. How could we have understood, either the nature or the consequences of sin, in the absence of the written law? nor unless the law had been not only proclaimed, but brought to bear, put into experimental exercise?

The rights of property, for instance—what adequate acquaintance, what precise and clearly defined views should we have had of the importance of preserving to each individual the share of things allotted to him—the happiness and blessings attaching to something of our own, to possessory title, and the dangers and evils resulting from trespassing on what belongs to others, but for the law clearly laid down, '*thou shalt not covet*,'¹ '*be content with such things as ye have*'²? nor unless the law thus precisely laid down had been brought to bear, and its effects seen and exemplified in human life? Is there not here a ray of light thrown on the mystery of evil, on why evil is permitted to run its terrible course?

Verse 8. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.

True the evil nature with which we were born found occasion, in this clearly laid down law, for the exercise of its rebellious and combative disposition—it had had no motive to stir it into action but for the law, just as an armed man lies inactive unless and until one appears to whom he is opposed; then at once his spirit of enmity and hostility is aroused and is exhibited in action, and the revelation of the foe converts the man, apparently of peace, into a man of war.

¹ Ex. xx. 17.

² Heb. xiii. 5.

Verse 9. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

Thus, says Paul, I, like others, was brought into existence, was alive, before I had any acquaintance with the requirements of the divine law, but with each and every fresh revelation of its requirements I came into renewed collision with it, and each was thus an occasion of sin to me, bringing me more and more under condemnation to that law which says, '*The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*'¹ Thus the more I knew of the law, the more I sinned, and the more surely I sealed my doom.

Verse 10. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.

The purity and holiness of God and the setting forth of the way of life, by obedience to the law, being thus made to me the way of death.

Verse 11. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

For sin in me, which might have been dormant but for the law, was brought into relief and into exercise by its requirements and by my vain endeavours to comply with them, and thus the Law, instead of lessening my guilt, increased it, and my doom was in consequence the more surely sealed.

Verse 12. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Yet the fault was not with the Law, nor with any of its details, which uphold nothing but what is holy, just, and good.

¹Ezek. xviii. 20.

Verse 13. Was then that which is good made death unto me ? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good ; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

Can it be said, then, that what is good was the cause of evil or of death ? or that because God is the first great cause he caused evil ? Nay, that cannot be. It is sin, that is to say, departure from good, which condemns man, it was departure from God's ways which caused evil. God might have existed for himself and to himself, might never have put forth his creative powers, his limitless capabilities of expansion and development ; then truly evil would not have arisen, there would then have been a condition of universal blessedness, albeit of negative blessedness. God's activities have in one sense *resulted* in evil, but by his infinite wisdom it will eventually bring about a condition of positive blessedness, which otherwise had never been known or conceived.

Sin was allowed a free course in order that its true character might become apparent, and the Law was given, still further to widen the breach, to show more fully how sin separates from God, and thus to make sin to be feared and abhorred, to become exceeding sinful.

Verse 14. For we know that the law is spiritual : but I am carnal, sold under sin.

A man who looks to the law and takes the law as his pattern and standard, may be said to have high and holy aims, but whilst in the flesh, and by his efforts, he cannot attain to that at which he aims, for he is a slave to sin.

Verse 15. For that which I do I allow not : for what I would, that do I not ; but what I hate, that do I.

A man may as the result of teaching and preaching, know the law, approve it as excellent, even love the way of truth and

desire to walk according to it, yet he cannot but obey the behests of the evil nature with which he came into existence; he is of himself a wretched slave to sin, entirely at the mercy of his master, cannot do what he would, must do what he would not. An experimental acquaintance with this fact is the first step in the divine life, the second being a confession and apprehension of his helplessness to extricate himself from this condition.

Verse 16. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good.

In thus acknowledging his condition of servitude and helplessness, and in admitting that goodness is something high which he cannot attain to,¹ he is paying a tribute to the law and testifying to its excellence.

Verse 17. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

And giving evidence that, being a slave, he cannot help obeying his master, yet that he would do otherwise were he free.

Verse 18. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

The workings of sin, and the pleadings of the law, together, have shown him that, in the nature with which he was born, in his flesh, there is no power or ability to do good, but an irresistible propensity to do evil, and this conviction has, instrumentally, given birth to a desire, to be free to obey the law. The throes and struggles between these two forces, reveal his weakness and helplessness, but they cannot carry him any further than this. If the law has brought a man to this condition it has done for him all that *it* can do.

¹Psalm cxxxix. 6.

Verse 19. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

The law which he has received into his heart urges him to do that which is just and good, but he finds he cannot; the law urges him to hate to do evil, and yet he does evil.

Verse 20. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Leading him to the conviction that he is a puppet, the sport and play of unseen powers.

Verse 21. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me.

For, says he, when I, were I free, would do good, an evil influence, ever present with and dwelling in me, paralyses my powers.

Verse 22. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.

The entrance of thy Word has given me desires after holiness and made me to delight in godliness.

Verse 23. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Yet there still remains within me that old slave driver, sin, who is for ever asserting himself and claiming to exert his authority over me.

Verse 24. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

How wretched, painful, exhausting, and distressing is this condition, the condition in which Apollos was when '*knowing only the baptism of John*';¹ the condition in which those are who '*have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge,*' and who '*go about to establish their own righteousness.*'²

And must it be ever so? is there a deliverance to be had? is there a '*way of salvation*'?³ is there one so strong, so wise, so loving, and so powerful as to be able and willing to set me free to serve my God?

Verse 25. I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Yes, there is, thanks be to God, who has sent his Son to **save** sinners, and who, having laid the foundation by the sacrifice of himself and through death has, in his resurrection power, given life, quickened those who were dead, and in due time will complete the work by the redemption of the body.

If, then, we who are in Christ still sin, it is unwillingly, it causes us distress, we have no pleasure in sin, our delight and joy are in fulfilling every detail of the Law, and our desire is to walk consistently and in harmony with God's will as set forth in the law for our guidance and direction—although we no longer regard it as our taskmaster, nor our obedience to it as that whereby we must stand or fall.

¹Acts xviii. 25.

²Rom. x. 2-3.

³Acts xvi. 17.

CHAPTER VIII.

Verse 1. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Those who are in Christ Jesus, that is, those who are his by election and grace, and who are also '*called*,' that is, those to whom it has been made known through the revelation of the Spirit, that they are the sons of God, are delivered from the fear of condemnation, and while they remember this, while they '*keep their Lord by faith in view*,' while they '*walk in the light*,'¹ they will be free from the slavery of sin, they will live above it, it will be under their feet; but, alas ! how many are the earthly mists which becloud our view of the truth ? Sloth, carelessness, false teaching, indulged sin, bodily infirmities, loneliness, losses, crosses and other '*manifold temptations*,' which for a season bring us into heaviness. And when and while shrouded in these, and no longer able to see Christ in his fulness, our peace is broken or even comes to an end, and we again come into bondage.

Verse 2. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

As there are laws of nature, so there are laws of grace; that is to say, certain effects are the unfailing result of certain conditions; those whose spirits are still united to the souls with which they were born into the world, those who are yet '*in the flesh*,' cannot, spite of their most strenuous efforts, do otherwise than sin; whilst those who are '*in Christ*,'² being set free from the bondage of sin, are set free to be holy—are no longer bound to sin, but can be holy.

Verse 3. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.

¹¹ John i. 7.

²² Cor. v. 17.

The Law can do much, but with all its purity, with all its promises, with all its threatenings and terrors, it cannot put an end to sin or induce men to conform to its standard of perfection; and for this reason, that the spirit (the active principle) in man cannot do otherwise than obey the behests of the superior part (the latent element) of his being.

A man who is yet '*in the flesh*,' as the Scriptures technically term that soul or nature which all men inherit from Adam, cannot walk so as to please God. And the flesh is incurably bad, it cannot be radically changed, by having set before it, either the promises or the threatenings of the Law.

But, what the Law cannot do, God has accomplished through Jesus Christ. God has put away sin by the *death* of his Son, and brought in holiness by the *resurrection* of Jesus Christ. His plan of operations, so to speak, being to send his Son into the world incognito, so veiled by a human body as to be, except for his sinless goodness, indistinguishable from other men, yet still divinely perfect, that is, with his divine power unimpaired, although for the moment held in suspense, yielded up to the Father; and this was in order that there might be a final and complete exhibition of the abominable character of sin, of fallen humanity's unreasonableness, hopeless depravity, absolute irreconcilability, and unconquerable hostility to God.

The legal murder and cruel crucifixion, not by barbarians but by religious men, of One infinitely pure, without spot or blemish, put the finishing touch to a terrible picture, and showed that nothing would avail but the condemnation of man's fleshly nature to death. Infinite Justice requires an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, death for death. The (most highly cultivated) fleshly nature in man, which could and did, to the utmost limit of its capabilities, put God to death, must be consigned to eternal damnation.

Verse 4. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

But this awful crime was to be overruled for blessing, as is shown by the fact that those who through faith are born of the Spirit, and who (also by faith) walk in the Spirit, are found to have God's law written in their hearts, and to delight to show it forth in their lives.

Verse 5. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

For just as those who are *unregenerate*, inevitably and invariably obey the motions of their (fleshly) nature, so those who are *regenerate* cannot but, and do, obey the motions of their (spiritual) nature, of the Spirit of Christ which is within them.

Verse 6. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

And just as inevitably and invariably are the unregenerate and the regenerate on their way, the one to eternal damnation and eternal separation from the Divine Being, the other to eternal glory and eternal union with the Triune God.

Verse 7. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

And this must be so, because the unregenerate hate God and separate *themselves* from him, and never would or could dwell with him in peace.

Verse 8. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

So, then, those who are and remain unregenerate cannot, however much they may strive to do so, please God. The question for such is not, '*What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?*'¹ but, how may I be '*born again,*' become regenerate?

¹Matt. xix. 16.

Verse 9. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Here comes in the personal, practical question, am I regenerate or unregenerate?

*'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought;
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I his, or am I not?'*

This question the Apostle decides by saying, *they* are regenerate, *they* are in the Spirit, in whom the Spirit *dwells*. They may not be filled with the Spirit, there may be little, if any, evidence of growth in grace or holiness, but if the seed of the Divine life has been sown in the heart, if the germ of grace has been implanted there, then the work is begun—and the Infinite Love, Wisdom, and Power which began, will, in his own way and time, carry on and complete that which he has begun. Those in whose hearts he has taken up his abode and dwells, *'are complete IN HIM,'*¹ however incomplete they may be in *themselves*. If in human affairs, *'once begun is half done'*—in affairs divine, once begun is wholly done.

On the other hand, those in whose hearts even the seed of the divine life has not been sown, and, alas! there are such! these are not regenerate, and are not the children of God nor heirs of God, and they will not inherit eternal life; and eternal life can only come by *inheritance*, it cannot be *bought* or *earned*.

Verse 10. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

If Christ be in you, that is, if the vital spark, the germ of a new condition, has been placed within you (as is the case with the worm whose existence as a worm is about to close, but who by divine plan and purpose is then to enter upon a new condition), if Christ be in you, then although the sentence, *'the soul that sinneth it shall die,'* has been carried out in regard to

¹Col. ii. 10.

your fleshly nature or soul, the latent element of your being, and will be carried out in regard to your body, the casket which contains your liberated spirit, yet that spirit, married as it is to another, even to Jesus who rose from the dead, who ever liveth, will rise again, and, by virtue of his perfect righteousness, will live for ever.

Verse 11. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

And more than that, if your spirit is one with the Spirit of Christ (and it is if he has declared it to be so), then, he who raised Jesus, with a glorified body, will raise you up, with a glorified body, also.

Verse 12. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

This, then, is our high and holy calling as Believers—our fleshly nature is in a condition of death, and we must not obey its behests, and if, and as, we remember and keep this truth in view, we shall not do so but be set free from the obligation to sin. This is what is referred to in the Scriptures as *walking* by faith.

Verse 13. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

If, on the one hand, we lose sight of or forget this truth, and in consequence come to obey the motions of our carnal nature, or to rest in a vain attempt to keep the law and thereby to merit God's favour, we shall die. It is not enough to know the truth, we must practise it; we must live and walk in the power of it. But if, on the other hand, obeying the motions of the Spirit of Christ which dwells in us, we keep in the place of death the motions of our carnal nature, we shall in due time enter into life, and be then set free, altogether and for ever, not only from its power and dominion, but from its presence too.

Verse 14. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

For those alone are truly and really subjects of regeneration, who not only have the Spirit of Christ in them, but are led by it.

Verse 15. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

These have the spirit of adoption. They are moved and actuated by love, and not by fear of the consequences of disobedience; they have true filial affection for their Father in heaven, and they reciprocate the love which he has for those who are his by generation of the Holy Ghost.

Verse 16. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

And if this be so we shall have an inward experience which will testify to us, and assure us, that we are of the number of the Elect; that we are of those who '*should be saved*,'¹ that we have '*passed from death unto life*,'² and thus our '*calling and election*' will be made '*sure*'³ to ourselves.

Verse 17. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

And if children of God, if we have entered the divine family, we shall in due time become partakers of divine riches, for we have now proprietary rights in the family estate, and the prospects before us are most glorious.

Did he suffer in the flesh? so do we. Did he die? so did we. Had he life in himself by the power of which he triumphed over death? so have we. Did he rise from the dead with a glorified body? so shall we. Did he enter into glory? so shall we. '*He'll not be in glory and leave me behind.*'

¹Acts ii. 47. ²John v. 24. ³2 Peter i. 10.

Verse 18. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Viewed by themselves, our sufferings here are grievous indeed, but viewed by comparison with the joys and glories of which we are made the inheritors, in and to all eternity, they are as dust in the balance.

Verse 19. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

And this glorified condition will not be one of self-centred enjoyment—our entrance into glory will be coincident with the day, long looked for and earnestly desired, when the disorder which now reigns in animate and inanimate nature will terminate, and be exchanged for universal joy and rejoicing.

Verse 20. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope.

It was not God's purpose in creation that there should be such misery and disorder as has reigned on the earth for nigh six thousand years. He does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men. For wise and sufficient reasons he has permitted it, but only to overrule it for blessing, and he permits its continuation, only until the day appointed for release arrives.

Verse 21. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Then, not regenerate man only, but all created things, will be put in order and made to work in glorious and lovely harmony. Then the present conditions of upset and confusion will come to an end. On the day in which the redeemed among men are set free, order will be restored, and deliverance from the bondage of corruption vouchsafed, to all created things.

Verse 22. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

For well we know, by observation and painful experience, that now all things are out of order; not mankind only, but the whole course of nature.

Verse 23. And not only they, but ourselves also which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

And not only are all created beings now looking forward with sad longings to this day of release, but even those who are '*in Christ*,' those who are appointed unto salvation—those to whom this glorious prospect has been made known as their portion, and who are already in possession of material guarantees that this is so, even we, impatiently and with sighs and groans, await the completion of the work begun, in the redemption of our vile bodies—the transfiguration, by which they shall be made like to his glorious body.

Verse 24. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for ?

For faith in that which is unseen implies hope, the looking for something not yet in possession; for we do not *hope* for what we already *have*, but for what will be ours when we get it.

Verse 25. But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

Yet hope does not necessarily involve or imply any uncertainty or unreality as to what is hoped for. Although our blessedness is a reversionary one, it is yet an absolute reversion, and one which will certainly fall in to us at maturity, and if patiently waited for will even now yield much solid and present enjoyment.

Verse 26. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

And meanwhile the Spirit of God, who knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust, who knows our ignorance, our inability to put our needs into words or even to order our thoughts aright, undertakes for us; and God, who hears the prayers of his Saints and their cries of pain, will, still more, be moved by the intercessions made for us by the Divine Spirit with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Verse 27. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

And God, to whom alone belong the attributes of omnipresence and omniscience, knows all that passes in our lives, and is acquainted with all our thoughts and feelings; for it is the Holy Ghost who dwells within us, and that infinitely perfect and divine Spirit can make no mistake in the prayers which he dictates, nor can he in the least degree fail, in the mode, manner, time, or subject, of the requests which he prefers on our behalf.

Verse 28. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

And whatever the Elect suffer, whether before or after their *calling*, however long they may have to wait, however strange and mysterious may be the operations of his providence, it is certain that all is tending to, and will accomplish, the purposes of our infinitely wise, powerful, and loving God, and will in the end be seen and acknowledged by all such, to have been the very best adapted to bring about their highest good and supremest blessedness.

Verse 29. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Yes, the final destiny of the Elect, though unknown to themselves, was settled in the divine counsels before the world began, and their sanctification and the means thereto, as well as their salvation and the instrumentalities by which it would be brought about, were arranged for and predetermined in the same way—God's purpose being that those chosen should, through his Son, be born again, and that thus He, the first begotten from the dead, should be a second Adam, whose seed should be as the sand which is by the sea shore for multitude.

Verse 30. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

And those thus *chosen*, are in God's providence *called*, that is, their election is in due time made known to themselves and to others;—and those called, are perfected or matured in time by being taught and by its being revealed to them, more and more clearly, what are the grounds on which they can claim acquittal or justification before God;—and it is *thus* that they are made meet for the inheritance of the saints and for entrance into glory.

As salvation is a matter of light, so sanctification is a matter of *more light*—clearer and more correct views, a fuller revelation of what God's purposes towards us are. Our righteousness is as perfect to begin with as it ever will be, for it is not ours, but Christ's. Where we fail is not in obedience, but in apprehension; and hence it is said that we are '*sanctified by faith*'¹ as well as *saved by faith*.

¹Acts xxvi. 18.

Verse 31. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us ?

What have we to say to all this? If our election, our calling, our regeneration, our justification, our sanctification, our glorification, are all of God; and if, therefore, he is certainly on our side, what need for doubt or fear lest our own folly or the evil designs of others should frustrate God's purposes ?

Verse 32. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ?

If God, in order to the accomplishment of these designs, has not spared that which was the most precious of his possessions, the life and blessedness of his only begotten Son; if, so to speak, God has '*hated*' his own Son,¹ and loved us, that is, has so loved us as not to allow his love for his own Son to stand in the way of our salvation, and did not spare even him, but delivered him up to untold loss and suffering in order to the bestowment of blessing on us, how can we suppose that he will withhold anything else, or that he will hesitate to bestow what, and whatever, may be needful to complete and perfect our blessedness?

Verse 33. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth.

And who is there to interfere, to interpose any hindrance to this?—who can lay any charge against one who is acquitted by the highest court of appeal—by God the Judge of all the earth?

Verse 34. Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

¹Luke xiv. 26; Malachi i. 3.

Who can require the law to take its course when it has already done so, and when the Son of God who was put to death, although for our offences not his own, has been raised from the dead, and when he claims as his own those for whom he died, and who died with him, and who now live, not by reason of their descent from Adam, but because they are partakers of the same resurrection life which he has who *'proceeded forth and came from God' ?*¹

Verse 35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ?

Will Christ's love for his people be quenched by the conditions to which they may be brought by the varieties of tribulation which befall them and mar their earthly lives ? Will not his love rather be fanned into a flame by the fact that their sufferings are inflicted by his enemies, and are endured for his sake and in his service ?

Verse 36. As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long ; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

The sufferings of the Lord's people were not only foreseen but foretold, as were their sins also ; *'ere he called me well he knew what a heart like mine could do.'*

Verse 37. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

No, none of these things can frustrate the divine purposes and plans.

Verse 38. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come.

¹John viii. 42.

Nothing after this life nor in this life, no individual of a superior order of being nor any combination of such beings acting together, no influences however powerful, present or to come, in time or in eternity.

Verse 39. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Nothing in heaven, nothing in hell, no being and no thing created, can touch or affect the love which God the Father has for us, and which he has displayed towards us, in and through his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

CHAPTER IX.

Verse 1. I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.

Having at the close of the eighth chapter concluded his exposition of the *doctrines* of the Gospel, and thus declared all the counsel of God as regards the way of salvation, the mind of the Apostle now turns to the practical bearing of all this upon his own countrymen, the Jews—for although the epistle is specially addressed to the Church in Rome, with Paul it was always '*the Jew first.*'

In these early days, the great subject of controversy in the religious world was the relative position of Jew and Gentile. The coming of the Messiah had inaugurated a revolution which was gradually subverting and turning upside down many traditionary beliefs, and the minds of Believers were much exercised on the subject of the relations between Jew and Gentile.

This cloud, which made its appearance in the Church very soon after Pentecost, had since spread in all directions, and now hung like a pall over the religious world; and the zeal of the Jew for the law was evidently ever in the mind of the Apostle whilst writing this epistle.

In Chapter I., verse 16, he had declared that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, '*to the Jew first and also to the Gentile,*' and this although he was *par excellence* the Apostle to the Gentiles. He does not deny that hitherto the Jew had been a special object of divine favour—that God's *covenanted* mercies had been almost entirely confined to the Jews, that God's purposes towards the Jews had been revealed, with a fulness and completeness such as was denied to the Gentiles—that the Jew had *promises* which the Gentile had not—yet he had shown that God's *ultimate* purposes towards the Gentiles, although not as clearly or as fully *revealed*, were yet the same towards the Jews, that there was '*no difference.*'

This must have been a staggering blow to the Jews, zealous of the law, for the Apostle had made it unmistakably plain and clear that both were to be saved in the same way—the Jew *by* faith, the Gentile *through* faith,¹ that is to say, the Jew by faith in a revelation made direct to the Jewish nation, and the Gentile by faith in the same revelation, although as, in God's providence,

¹Rom. iii. 30.

the revelation was to be declared, preached, passed on to the Gentiles by Jews—their justification is said to be *through* faith.

With the tenacious clinging of his brethren the Jews to the Law, in his mind, the Apostle solemnly testifies that his conscience, moved by the Holy Ghost, warns him and bids him plainly declare, that whilst for those having faith in Christ there is salvation, there can be none for those, Jew or no Jew, who look to be saved by the works of the Law.

What he has declared and preached about Christ, and about those who are in Christ Jesus, is the truth, and *no* lie. Those who fail to see and apprehend that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, are believing and trusting in what *is* a lie.

Verse 2. That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.

And knowing how his kinsmen according to the flesh clung to the law and still insisted on the necessity for a strict observance of it, not seeing, that the substance being come the shadow was gone, that its ceremonial observances were a thing of the past—that being in possession of the person of the Messiah and he being now by the Holy Ghost present with them, the figures and pictures which portrayed him were to be laid aside as carnal and not spiritual. Knowing all this, his heart misgave him—their incurable and ineradicable blindness weighs on his mind and is a continual distress—it imparts to his spirit a feeling of gloom and unhappiness.

Verse 3. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

What would he not give, what would he not sacrifice, could he thereby obtain a blessing for those to whom he is so closely attached. Could the sacrifice of himself, of his own happiness, avail, he would pay even such a price; but, alas, a *man* cannot redeem his *brother*, much less a *man* a nation.

He evidently felt in regard to his people and nation what many a Believer feels in regard to his own kith and kin—‘how

can I desire a salvation which is not to be shared by them?'—like these he feels that he would be prepared, if need be, to forego the blessing for himself, if such a sacrifice could avail to save and deliver those he loves on earth, and he cannot conceive being able with equanimity to see them left out and consigned to eternal damnation.

Verse 4. Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.

To think, says Paul, that those who are of such high and ancient lineage, descendants in unbroken line of the elect Jacob, or rather Israel—that those who (in Abraham), cut off from father and mother, were adopted, taken up by the Lord, that these should be cut off from Him—that those to whom such glorious promises were made, with whom such solemn engagements were entered into—that those to whom God so clearly and in such marvellous manner made known the way of righteousness and the rewards attaching to obedience, saying, '*this do and thou shalt live*,' and so clearly set forth the way and wages of unrighteousness—that those who were appointed by God to be his servants, to make known the truths of God to others—who were promised such wages and such rewards for every good thing they did;

Verse 5. Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

That those whose ancestry and family were the same as that of the promised Messiah, the incarnate God, exalted as he is far above all created beings in heaven or earth, and who is able by the sacrifice of *himself* to redeem not *one nation* only but a *whole world*—to think that all this must go for nothing, and that Israel must be blotted out of the book of the living, be cursed from Christ—that their very privileges must become barriers and stumbling blocks, a curse instead of a blessing!

Verse 6. Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.

But, thank God, Israel is not wholly cut off—'*I have yet seven thousand left in Israel,*' for although as a nation they were for the time cut off, there was a seed which should yet serve him. And it still is as it was at the nation's birth, all those called Jews are not Jews.

Verse 7. Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

Indeed, none of Abraham's children born in the ordinary course of nature proved to be the promised seed, and it was not till Abraham was '*as good as dead*'¹ that it was declared: '*In Isaac shall thy seed be called.*'

Verse 8. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

In other words, the children of the flesh are not those to whom the promises are made (another bitter pill for the circumcision). The natural man is not and cannot be a child of God, '*Ye must be born again.*'² It is now, as it was with Abraham, those who in fulfilment of the divine promise are born out of the course of nature, those who are born of the Spirit, it is those alone '*whose are the promises.*'

Verse 9. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.

And this is only an exact fulfilment of the terms of the promise, which is, that God will call out a people for his name, by electing grace, and as an act of divine sovereignty—it is one of those matters of which he gives no account.

¹Heb. xi. 12.

²John iii. 7.

Verse 10. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac;

Such another act of divine sovereignty was exhibited in regard to Rebecca, the wife of Abraham's son Isaac, the second in the line of succession, concerning whose children also, as in the case of Abraham, a prophetic declaration was made.

Verse 11. (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)

And inasmuch as this declaration was made before they were born, and before, therefore, they had done anything either good or evil, this was to demonstrate and make unmistakably clear to human intelligence, that man's blessedness is dependent not upon his own works, on what he may do or leave undone, but upon God's sovereign love and favour.

Verse 12. It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.

It being foretold of Isaac and Rebecca's children that the elder should serve the younger, in order to show that divine blessing is not bestowed under any law of heredity, but as a matter of Divine Sovereignty. The blessing in this case, declared by the word of God, being brought about by the providence of God, and this in spite of a complex variety of opposing circumstances and evil influences which, however, were all made to work together for the fulfilment of the prophetic declaration.

Verse 13. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

The exact wording of this declaration being, '*Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*' What is intended to be conveyed in these strange words may be seen, by reflecting on such passages as the following, '*He that hateth his life in this world,*'¹ '*No man ever yet hated his own flesh,*'² '*If any man . . . hate not his father,*'³ '*He that loveth father or mother more than me.*'⁴

¹John xii. 25. ²Ephes. v. 29. ³Luke xiv. 26. ⁴Matt. x. 37.

Verse 14. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

Has not this the appearance, we may say, of unfairness and injustice? Does it not look as though God were unequal in his ways? Nay, this cannot be, nor can it be right or consistent with our position, that of prisoners at the bar, whatever we may think or feel, to challenge the Judge on the bench and to say that God, the Maker and the Administrator of the Law, is acting contrary to the eternal laws of truth and justice.

Verse 15. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

When God said to Moses, *'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion,'* it is plain that he claimed the right of exercising divine sovereignty, and of displaying the glories of electing love in his own way, without giving account to his creatures of the why and wherefore for so doing.

Verse 16. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

From which it is plain that blessedness is not dependent on whether a man walks or runs, does little or does much, on whether he is willing to be saved and to yield himself to be sanctified, but on God's mercy, which begins, carries on, and completes the work of grace in those he has appointed to salvation.

Such once *'ran to do evil,'* but *'were made willing in the day of his power.'* The work of grace shows itself in their *'running to and fro to seek the word of the Lord,'* next, in their being led to pray, *'Draw us and we will run after thee,'* and finally to their becoming established in grace and being enabled to say, *'I will run the way of thy commandments.'*

Blessedness, then, does not emanate, or take its rise, from anything in the natural man's heart or life; it does not depend on whether or not he is willing to be saved or sanctified, but it emanates from something in God, who, having determined to bless, does so, in his own time and in his own way, and spite of unwillingness in the object of his mercy, and opposing circumstances of every kind.

Verse 17. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

And that blessedness is ascribable to God's sovereignty of purpose, is confirmed by looking on the other side of the shield—for do not the Scriptures plainly declare concerning Pharaoh, that it was God's purpose to turn to account Pharaoh's rebellious opposition, in order to set forth and display God's power, and that Pharaoh was, in God's providence, elevated to his proud position, for the express purpose of being used to advertise God's power, throughout the world and to all generations?

Verse 18. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

Demonstrating that God *does*, whether such action on his part approves itself or not to our finite judgment, elect some unto salvation, thereby bringing into play, giving exercise to and displaying, the divine attribute of Mercy—whilst leaving others to the hardening effects of sin, thereby giving exercise to and displaying the divine attribute of Justice; thus showing himself to be, as is said by Isaiah, '*A just God and a Saviour.*'

Verse 19. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?

It is but natural that those who hear such a doctrine preached should retort, Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will? and, whilst not daring to challenge the Judge, we, prisoners at the bar, may well say amongst ourselves, how is this? how can we in fairness be condemned, and to such awful punishment, seeing that everything is done according to plans and purposes foreordained and prearranged by that God whom none can resist and whose purposes none can defeat?

Verse 20. Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

How are such considerations to be met? Are they not '*Satan's sly suggestions and I need no answer give*'? In any case, and however the matter may present itself to our finite minds, we must accept the position, and it is our wisdom to do so. For us to challenge the judgment of the High Court of Heaven is as useless as to find fault with God our Creator for having created us at all.

Verse 21. Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

As well might the dead inanimate clay dispute or find fault with the potter, whose is the power, and who certainly will do with the clay what he thinks to be best, and, as will eventually appear, what is in reality best.

Verse 22. What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.

Has not the potter with his clay, or the painter on his canvas, the power and the right to pourtray and illustrate that which is ugly or awful, and which ought to be avoided, as well as that which is beautiful and attractive, and may not God exhibit, in the material with which he works, his wrath as well as his love, and the fitness for eternal destruction of those reprobates who hate, oppose, and fight against him?

Verse 23. And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.

As well as in the Elect, the glorious effects of sovereign love and free unmerited pardon? and the fitness of those thereby made meet and prepared for glory—for eternal life?

Verse 24. Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

And, says the Apostle, are not we Believers, Jews as well as Gentiles, that is, those to whom it has been revealed that they are of those who should be saved, are not we, specimens of his handiwork, vessels of mercy turned out by the divine Potter, and designed by his Spirit of beauty and perfection?

Verses 25 and 26. As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God.

And is not thereby confirmed, what by the Spirit of prophecy was declared beforehand by Hosea, viz., that God's children would be found amongst the Gentiles as well as amongst the Jews?

Verses 27 to 29. Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha.

And is not thereby confirmed, also, what was declared by the prophet Isaiah, viz., that out of the Jewish nation God's children would be found to be a select few only?

Verse 30. What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.

What does this go to show if not that between Jew and Gentile there is no difference? it is only the elect out of each who are saved, and these not by their good works, but by the electing love of God, revealed to them and believed by them—whereby they have, not *obtained*, but *attained* to a perfect righteousness, entitling them to appear before God without spot or blemish.

And this righteousness the Gentile has attained to who has not even sought after God, or attempted to obtain any righteousness of his own.

Verse 31. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.

Whilst the Jew, who has diligently sought after God, earnestly and persistently endeavouring to obtain that righteousness which belongs to those who perfectly fulfil the requirements of the law, has utterly failed to attain to any righteousness except such as God's prophets declared to be in God's sight but as filthy rags.

Verse 32. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone.

And why was this? Because the Jews were bent on *doing* instead of on *believing*—they were occupied with themselves, and

their own doings, instead of with God and his doings—they stumbled, as their fathers stumbled when it was said to them, ‘*Ye cannot serve the Lord,*’ and they replied, ‘*Nay, but we will serve the Lord.*’¹

Verse 33. As it written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

All this may appear subversive of current ideas as to what is sound doctrine, and to be preaching, revolutionary in its character, but did not Isaiah foresee and foretell that the coming of the Messiah, the laying of the foundation stone in Zion, would be a cause of stumbling and offence, as it was to the vast majority of the Jews to whom he was sent.

On the other hand those who did receive and believe in him, and who humbly accepted as true what he came to declare and make known, had, as the prophet also foretold, no cause to be ashamed. For although they were, in consequence, despised by and separated from their fellow-countrymen and made to be partakers of the sufferings of their Lord, yet they had given to them sure and certain hopes of hereafter sharing his glories.

¹Joshua xxiv. 19, 21.

CHAPTER X.

Verse 1. Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

Brethren, that is, you who, with me, are born again—are new creatures in Christ Jesus—who are members of the family of the redeemed (see Eph. i. 10, and iii. 15), spiritual brethren.

All Believers have *spiritual* affections, these being the workings of the new nature begotten in them; but *natural* affections, although better regulated than before, are not extinguished.

It was natural affection which led Paul to desire that all those to whom he was attached by ties of kindred and nationality might be saved, in this world and the next, from the consequences of sin and alienation from God.

Verse 2. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

He recognizes to the full, and testifies to, the zeal and sincerity of the religious Jew, but these traits of character, admirable as they are when rightly directed, have in the divine view no value at all in themselves; on the contrary, applied in a wrong direction, they hasten men to destruction—drive them to extremes of evil, and sink them deeper than ever in sin.

A locomotive engine has enormous powers of usefulness while running on the track, but once off the rails it becomes a power for destruction. A strong man, with unique muscular power and nervous energy but without technical knowledge in the cultivation of flowers and fruit, instead of making a better gardener would make a far worse one than a man of less than ordinary strength who had such knowledge.

Earnestness and zeal are not peculiar to the regenerate, and have no merit in themselves. Who has such earnestness and zeal as is displayed by Satan and his angels?

Verse 3. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

Thus, though filled with zeal and energy, the Jews, being ignorant of what is needful to satisfy the infinite perfections of a holy God, being, in other words, '*ignorant of God's righteousness*,' and intent only upon attaining to their own ideal of holiness and righteousness, were so occupied with themselves, and so lifted up by self-confidence and self-satisfaction, that they had no time or disposition to contemplate and admire the way in which the wisdom, the love, and the power of God are engaged in the complex and delicate operation of bringing good out of evil, of lifting men out of the horrible pit and miry clay of sin and corruption—of setting their feet on a rock and establishing their goings—of commencing, carrying on, and completing the work of grace.

They preferred their own way of salvation to God's way; and thus, through self-deceit and willing ignorance, they really set God at defiance.

Verse 4. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

A Believer has entered into rest so far as his eternal safety and blessedness are concerned, he has ceased from his own works, he has abandoned his vain attempt to so keep the law as to earn or merit God's favour.

In committing himself to Christ, his vain and frantic efforts to do the impossible come to an end; for him the beginning of the life of faith is the end of the life of meritorious works. The man who has his eyes opened to see himself in Christ, has done with the Law as a means of salvation.

The drowning sailor has to do with the law of specific gravity, but once placed on the lifeboat he ceases from his own efforts and his contest with the law of specific gravity; his safety now no longer depends on whether or not he can successfully overcome the laws of nature; the lifeboat is to him the end of the law of specific gravity; he is saved apart from it and in spite of it, albeit that law remains unchanged and unchangeable.

Verse 5. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.

The Law was given by Moses, and '*the righteousness which is of the Law*' was plainly set forth and diligently taught by him.

It plainly declared that those who kept the law would, as a condition of so doing, have both life and happiness, and this was not only taught as a doctrine, but its truth was exemplified, in and by experience; for when, and while, and in proportion as, the children of Israel kept God's commandments, they did receive the promised blessing; but experience soon showed that the blessings thus to be obtained were uncertain and short lived.

Joshua was brought to see this, and he plainly declared, '*Ye cannot serve the Lord,*' although then, as now, the multitude held on to the belief that they could, and to the determination that they would, saying, '*Nay, but we will serve the Lord.*'¹

Our Lord expounded and expanded the requirements of the Law more fully even than Moses, showing that it had to do with thoughts and desires as well as with words and actions; his teaching making '*sin exceeding sinful,*' and, so to speak, making '*sin to abound*'; so much so that his disciples cried out, '*Who then can be saved?*' to which the reply was, '*With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.*'²

At the same time our Lord made it clear that he was not come to destroy the Law, but to establish it. Thus when the lawyer stood up tempting him, saying, '*Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*' Jesus replied, '*What is written in the law?*' and when the lawyer summed up the ten commandments in two sentences, and claimed that to love God '*with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself,*' was to perfectly keep the law, Jesus accepted both his statement and his conclusion, saying solemnly to him, '*This do, and thou shalt live.*'³

The righteousness which is of the Law, or as it is called, man's '*own righteousness,*' consists therefore in *doing*, in *works* wrought by man; whereas God's righteousness consists in *believing*, in works wrought for man.

Verse 6. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:)

And the righteousness which is of faith, although not fully unfolded and clearly set forth by Moses, was foreseen and prophesied of by him in the 29th and 30th chapters of Deuteronomy. It was one of the promises seen afar off.⁴ His was, doubtless, one of the cases our Lord had in his mind when

¹Joshua xxiv. 19-21. ²Mark x. 26-27. ³Luke x. 25-28. ⁴Heb. xi. 13.

he said, '*Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them.*'¹ This was the way of salvation which the prophets enquired into and searched diligently, '*Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify.*'² It was one of '*the secret things*' which '*belong unto the Lord our God.*'³

It was of '*God's righteousness*' as well as of '*the righteousness which is of the law*' that Moses discoursed in the charge given by him from which these verses are quoted. As God showed to Moses the promised land, and caused him to see it afar off, so, by the Spirit of prophecy, he was shown and caused to see the then far-off spiritual future of the Jews. There was displayed before him a series of views, showing the blessings following on obedience, the curses attending disobedience, and the final result, utter failure to merit God's favour, complete departure from, and rebellion against, his government, and the consequent consignment to captivity of their whole nation, and in the end their complete scattering among the nations of the world.

But Moses saw, and to the later prophets it was yet more fully shown, that God does not forsake his people, that he had provided some better thing for them than the Commandments of the Law, a New Commandment, simple and easy of fulfilment, not requiring to be *searched for* by them in heaven. (Christ Jesus *came* into the world, he was not *brought* here.)

Verse 7. Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

Nor to be *striven after* by them in the place of the dead; but something to be brought to them as a free, unconditional gift; the Believer being called upon, as were the children of Israel, to '*Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.*'⁴

As the heaven and the earth which now are, were made by the '*word of the Lord . . . and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth,*' and not by a slow, laborious, and gradual process of evolution, for '*he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast*'⁵; so was it to be with the subjects of the new birth, they would be his creation, and be made, not by his *hand* but by his *word*.

As our Lord in his teaching expounded and expanded what Moses taught as regards '*the righteousness which is of the Law,*' so he expounded and expanded what Moses taught as regards '*the righteousness which is of faith.*'

¹Matt. xiii. 17.

²1 Peter i. 11.

³Deut. xxix. 29.

⁴Ex. xiv. 13.

⁵Psalm xxxiii. 6, 9.

He taught the Apostles, and through them the Church, that righteousness would *come* to man as a free gift of sovereign love, and becomes theirs without money and without price, '*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.*'¹ '*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.*'² '*Not that we loved God, but that he loved us.*'³

Verse 8. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach.

As saith the Scripture, '*Speak the WORD only, and my servant shall be healed*' (Matt. viii. 8). '*The WORDS that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life*' (John vi. 63). '*He that heareth my WORD . . . hath everlasting life*' (John v. 24). '*If ye continue in my WORD*' (John viii. 31). '*When any one heareth the WORD of the kingdom*' (Matt. xiii. 19). '*The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou HEAREST the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit*' (John iii. 8).

Verse 9. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

This day (as it were, the Apostle says) are these Scriptures fulfilled in your ears—for all you have to do to obtain eternal life, is to confess that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, and to believe that this same Jesus, who was crucified and buried, has been raised up by God, and by the Holy Ghost now dwells with and in you; do this and you are saved—he that doeth this '*Shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*'⁴

It was not you who by your prayers, or in any other way, brought him down from heaven, or raised him up from beneath. On the contrary, when, moved by infinite love and pity he came into the world, you killed him and cast him out of the vineyard and then consigned him to the grave, but the grave could not hold him; he rose from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of God, making intercession for his enemies, saying there, as he said on earth, '*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*'⁵ Divine love is indeed unquenchable !

¹John vi. 44.

²John vi. 37.

³1 John iv. 10.

⁴John v. 24.

⁵Luke xxiii. 34.

Verse 10. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Salvation—the passing from death unto life—is with each and all, a personal, individual, transaction between the soul and God. It is a matter of believing with the heart as well as with the head; yet it shows itself in the life, in both word and deed.

Verse 11. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

Here is seen what is meant by the Scripture which says, '*whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed*,' for, while this plain, simple, easy, and, so far as man is concerned, this inglorious way, is the only way of salvation, nothing else is needed, no works at all, only faith.

Verse 12. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

Neither is it a question of being a Jew or a Gentile, of whether the truth was declared long ago to our forefathers or is now first made known to ourselves; there is no difference. The only qualification for salvation is faith in the divine testimony.

Verse 13. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

As the first cry announces the birth of the babe, so all who give indication of life by calling on the name of the Lord, are partakers of the promises made by, or through, Moses. '*All unto whom the Word of God comes*,'¹ are children of God.

¹John x. 35.

Verse 14. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

Having shown that the Jew, as such, is no more a child of God than the Gentile, he goes on to refer to the instrumentalities by which the children of God are brought into being.

How can any call on one whom they do not know? and how can they know one of whom they have never heard? and how can a message be delivered, or a revelation be given, unless there be a messenger?

Verse 15. And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

And how can any go forth as messengers unless they be sent with a message? Isaiah, by the spirit of prophecy, had a view of God's purposes in this matter, and was enraptured, as are all God's people who are alive to the importance of missionary work, on seeing these messengers speeding along upon their delightful service.

Verse 16. But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?

But Isaiah foresaw, too, how these messengers would be received. To know the truth is not necessarily to obey it. Not all those who, in his day, heard the report he was divinely commissioned to make, believed it; and he foresaw that the same would be the case in Apostolic times.

Verse 17. So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Nevertheless, preaching is the appointed instrumentality for conveying the blessing. '*Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach*';¹ faith alone saves, but faith involves and implies hearing, and the hearing must relate to the Word of God, which alone has quickening power.

Verse 18. But I say, have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

Again, Isaiah, in viewing the course of the stream of truth, saw that it would be turned aside by the Jews, but he saw, too, that God's Word would not return to him void, that it would not flow back, return to its source, but that when the Jews refused to hear the Word, it would overflow, burst its banks, and **then** go forth to all nations, as it is said, '*Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word,*'² and it was thus that the way of the Lord was prepared, and his command fulfilled, '*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*'³

Verse 19. But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.

Pained and grieved to the heart as the Apostle was by the blindness and folly of his people, he recognized that the condition of things which so distressed him was only a fulfilment of what was foretold by Moses, viz., that Israel would sin against light and knowledge, and that God would meet the case by casting them down from their proud national position, and by placing over them those whom they looked upon with contempt, and who indeed were wholly ignorant of, and at that time were but fools in regard to, divine things.

Verse 20. But Esaiās is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.

¹1 Cor. i. 17. ²Acts viii. 4. ³Mark xvi. 15.

And a fulfilment, also, of what was foretold later by the prophet Isaiah, viz., that Christ would be received and owned by the sinful and ignorant Gentile, whilst being rejected and dis-owned by the wise, learned, and well-instructed Jew.

Verse 21. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

And that Jesus, in whose name and by whose spirit he spoke, would find this word of God, seen in vision, to be fulfilled in real life; and it was when Jesus did realize this, that he wept over Jerusalem, grieving, as did Paul, over their blindness, and yet yielding himself to his Father's will, saying, '*I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.*'¹

¹Matt. xi. 25-26.

CHAPTER XI.

Verse 1. I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

Are we to conclude, then, that *no Jews* are to be saved—that the whole people has forfeited its privileges—that both nationally and individually it is cut off root and branch? Did Paul preach this, he would be himself without hope, for he, too, was an Israelite, of the root of Abraham, of the branch of Benjamin.

Verse 2. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,

No, God has not forsaken his chosen people, neither those individuals among them whom he pre-ordained to eternal life and whom he knows to be his own, nor the nation as a whole which he elected to a special position in the world.

The prospect may seem dark, and the outlook gloomy, but so it was during that dismal chapter in Israel's history when the forlorn condition of things presented itself to the mind of Elijah, which he pleaded before God in prayer.

Verse 3. Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.

Urging that the whole of the prophets of the Lord had now been put to death one after the other, that the worship of Jehovah had been abolished, and its very insignia destroyed, he being

left the sole survivor of those who hitherto had kept the lamp of truth alight on the earth. The divine fire, it appeared to him, was now extinguished, but for one single spark, and this the enemies of the Lord were on the point of trampling out. The Divine cause on earth was thus hanging by a single thread—the family of God in this world was about to become extinct—so thought Elijah.

Verse 4. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.

But what was the divine rejoinder to this despairing appeal? God was well able to maintain his own cause, and told Elijah that as a matter of fact he was by no means the only godly man left, there being at that moment seven thousand men who not only still feared the God of Israel, but who had not and would not bow the knee to the popular idol.

It has ever been thus. The Scriptures abound with illustrations of the way in which God has ever had, and has ever preserved and kept alive, those who were ordained to eternal life.

In the days of the flood Satan had indeed brought matters to a sad pass, for we are told in Genesis vi. 5-8, that seeing '*the wickedness of man was great in the earth,*' it repented the Lord that he had made man, '*but Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord,*' and, including him, there were yet eight chosen ones left, to preserve and keep alive in the earth the divine family.

In Sodom there were not, it is true, even ten righteous to be found, yet God preserved alive elect Lot.

Out of Abraham's numerous seed according to the flesh, God reserved his chosen one, Isaac.

Of Isaac's two sons, if God hated Esau, he loved Jacob.

Although Jacob was bereaved of his son Joseph, Benjamin was left to him.

Although it was said of the sons of Jesse '*the Lord hath not chosen these,*' yet there remained one of whom it was said '*anoint him : for this is he.*'¹

Verse 5. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

Even so was it in the days of Paul—there was an elect remnant amongst the Jews, although as a nation they were enemies

¹ Sam. xvi. 10, 12.

to the cross of Christ, and in consequence were, as a nation, now cut off from divine favour and privilege; but it was sovereign grace, electing love, and not meritorious life, which secured blessing to these individuals.

Verse 6. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

And wholly so; for if these individuals owed anything whatever to their own good works or dispositions, their favoured position could not rightly be ascribed to *grace*; for grace means undeserved favour, and *divine grace* means *wholly* undeserved favour; whilst work means meritorious conduct, and *perfectly* not comparatively meritorious conduct. '*A sacrifice . . . to be accepted,*' must be without *blemish*.¹

Verse 7. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.

Though, therefore, Israel as a nation, looking to be favoured as a result of their privileged possession of the Law, and striving to be saved by their meritorious keeping of its commandments, has proved to be an absolute failure, yet individuals have been chosen out from among them, and have obtained favour with God; but only a few—the vast majority being blind to the truth that divine favour must be sought by faith, and not '*as it were by the works of the law.*'²

Verse 8. (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day.

And, as was foretold of them, this blindness to the truth still continues, they, in fact, having been raised up for the purpose

¹Levit. xxii. 21.

²Rom. ix. 32.

(as Pharaoh was for another purpose) of showing the awful effect on created beings of sin, in producing hopeless and irremedial spiritual impotency, gross and growing corruption, blindness and deafness, and this notwithstanding the most perfect restraining influences, and the most perfect system of rewards and punishments.

Verses 9 and 10. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them. Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back away.

David, by the spirit of prophecy, saw and spoke of this, showing that the very privileges of the Israelites, their feasts, their fasts, their religious observances, would be the occasion of their ruin, would help to precipitate and accentuate their downfall—these being wrested by them, as the Scriptures are, to their own destruction.

Verse 11. I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

Is, then, their failure and fall a final ending both to their existence as a nation and to all God's plans? and are God's promises to Abraham and his seed to be broken, or to remain unfulfilled after all, in spite of the divine declaration, '*My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips*'? ¹

By no manner of means. God is able, and he knows how, to bring good out of evil. And this begins to be seen already, for it was the rejection of Christ by the Jews, and their persecution of his followers, which has caused the truth to overflow the world; and the feuds and jealousies engendered by religious controversy have proved to be an advertising medium, whereby the facts and doctrines of the Christian religion have been kept alive, brought into prominence, and made known, the world over: '*Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached.*' ²

¹Psalms lxxxix. 34. ²Phil. i. 18.

Verse 12. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?

Now if such benefits have followed to the world at large as the result of the rejection of Christ by the Jews and their frantic efforts to destroy him and hinder his work—if the Gentiles have gained so much notwithstanding the enmity of the Jews, what may not be expected when the Jews acknowledge Christ as the Messiah, and become friends instead of foes?—when Jew and Gentile, instead of pulling different ways, both pull together?—for it has yet to be seen in all its fulness that in Abraham's seed '*shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.*'¹

Verse 13. For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office.

The Apostle, bethinking himself now of his calling as the Apostle to the Gentiles, of his declaration in Acts xviii. 6, '*henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles,*' and of the fact that those to whom he is addressing himself in Rome were largely Gentiles, seems to determine to put away for the moment the promptings of natural affection, which have been filling his mind and leading him to dwell so much on Jewish questions, and to address himself to '*you Gentiles,*' for the epistle after all is to and for them—their ears are open, although the ears of the Jews are closed.

Verse 14. If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

Feeling and trusting that the Jew may, perchance, be led, on perceiving the blessings and privileges now conferred on believing Gentiles, to desire to participate in them, and, that thus provoked by jealousy, some of them at least may be saved and become as brands plucked from the burning.

Verse 15. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?

¹Gen. xxii. 18.

Meanwhile, leaving the present, he indulges in hopes for the future; he rejoices that the many, the world at large, have benefited even at the expense of the few, the Jewish nation, but he looks forward with enraptured feelings to the time when the Jew will be brought back, comparing it to the joy of the parent whose child is brought back to life—as were the Shunamite's son and Jairus' daughter.

Verse 16. For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches.

While there is life there is hope. The first fruits were representative of the whole harvest, and a witness to its existence. The house of Israel is not extinct while a remnant is preserved—this remnant is a witness to its continued existence.

Few Jews are converted, but a few are, and these believing Jews are witnesses to the assurance given by God that he will not forsake his people, but that he will yet restore them to their national position in the world, as says the prophet Isaiah, '*For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land.*'¹

Verse 17. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree;

The position is this: God has, in judgment and for their sins as a nation, cut Israel off. Once they were compared to '*a green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit*': but now '*the branches of it are broken.*'² The trunk is stripped of every branch, and there is nothing to be seen, spiritually, of the ancient stock, save here and there a tiny shoot—but these show that there is still life in the branch.

And yet, although it is but here and there that a believing Jew is to be found, the family of God on earth is a great multitude. Although the ancient stock (but for those tiny shoots) is no longer to be seen, the tree is still covered with olive branches.

¹Isaiah xiv. 1. ²Jer. xi. 16.

And how is this ? because God *'did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name'*; ¹ and this people are those *'given'* to the Son *'by the Father,'* ² the elect *'whom he hath chosen,'* ³ those who *'should be saved,'* ⁴ the *'few chosen'* out of the *'many called,'* ⁵ the *'elect according to the foreknowledge of God,'* ⁶ *'the called of Jesus Christ,'* ⁷ those *'called according to his purpose,'* ⁸ *'the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called,'* ⁹ the *'called, and chosen, and faithful.'* ¹⁰

Yet, spiritually, all this great multitude are of the seed of Abraham, *'having,'* with him, *'the righteousness of God which is by faith'*; ¹¹ all are inwardly, though not outwardly, Jews, and derive both their life and their strength from the son of David, the stem of Jesse—from Christ, the true vine.

Verse 18. Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

But we are not, because the Jew is cut off, to rejoice over him as though he were accursed, but rather to mourn over his miserable condition, not forgetting that our blessedness succeeded his and comes to us through him. We are younger sons—the same root which bore him bears us, and it is only because there is life in the root that we have life. *'I am the true vine, ye are the branches.'* ¹²

Verse 19. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.

It is true that the Jews as a body are cut off for the time being—the door is shut against them, and the Gentiles flourish, as formerly did the Jews—the door shut to the Jew is open to the Gentile.

Verse 20. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear.

But why were the Jewish branches broken off ? It was because they relied on their own meritorious works instead of on the sovereign electing love of divine Grace.

¹Acts xv. 14.

²John vi. 37.

³Mark xiii. 20.

⁴Acts ii. 47.

⁵Matt. xx. 16.

⁶1 Peter i. 2.

⁷Rom. i. 6.

⁸Rom. viii. 28.

⁹Acts xv. 17.

¹⁰Rev. xvii. 14.

¹¹Rom. iii. 22.

¹²John xv. 5.

And why and how is the Gentile olive grafted on to the stem of Jesse? Solely because of, and through, their faith in the sovereign electing love of divine Grace.

Surrounded as we are by traps and snares, beset as we are by enemies without and within, it behoves us to walk warily, and to see to it that we are not *moved away from this position*, that we are not tempted to follow after a righteousness of our own. '*Happy is the man that feareth alway.*'¹ It is as true of Believers as it is of men of this world that '*pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.*'²

Verses 21 and 22. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

Whilst rejoicing in the love and mercy of God it is ever to be borne in mind—

That he '*is a God of judgment*' also (Isaiah xxx. 18).

That he '*will by no means clear the guilty*' (Ex. xxxiv. 7; Num. xiv. 18).

That '*whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*' (Gal. vi. 7).

That '*his servants ye are to whom ye obey*' (Rom. vi. 16).

That it is those '*who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory,*' etc., who attain to eternal life (Rom. ii. 7).

That it is if we '*continue in the faith*' (Col. i. 23).

That it is '*if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end,*' '*if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end*' (Heb. iii. 6, 14).

That '*he that endureth to the end shall be saved*' (Matt. x. 22).

That we must '*labour to enter into that rest*' (Heb. iv. 11).

And not, '*having begun in the Spirit,*' seek to be '*made perfect by the flesh*' (Gal. iii. 3).

Verse 23. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again.

¹Prov. xxviii. 14.

²Prov. xvi. 18.

It is to be borne in mind, too, that individual believing Jews are every whit as much favoured as individual believing Gentiles, and that the Jews in their corporate capacity, when as a people they believe in the divine revelations, as they one day will, will become again a nation, and will then again take their place as the most favoured nation on earth.

The Jews were once '*great among the nations*' ;¹ they are now '*greatly despised*,'² '*a reproach among all the nations*' ;³ but the day is coming when '*all nations shall call*' them '*blessed*.'⁴

Verse 24. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

If men of corrupt birth as well as breeding, if Gentile publicans and sinners, are saved, and sanctified, and made '*meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*,'⁵ how much more shall Jews, zealous of the law, be saved, when the veil is removed from their eyes, when they, too, see and believe ! how much more shall they receive the promises, and with us rejoice in them !

Verse 25. For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

And lest we should be tempted to imagine that on account of some goodness in ourselves we are now favoured above the Jews, it is here revealed and declared that this is the Lord's doing—that all this is but a carrying out of God's plans and purposes.

It is, in his mysterious wisdom, appointed, that for a decreed time the Jews are to be left to '*grope in darkness*,' as Moses foretold would be the case (Deut. xxviii. 29) if they did not observe to do all God's commandments. At times Believers do so also (Job xii. 25).

¹Lam. i. 1. ²Obad. 2. ³Jer. xxix. 18. ⁴Mal. iii. 12. ⁵Col. i. 12.

To the Gentiles the door is now open (1 Cor. xvi. 9; 2 Cor. ii. 12); but when '*the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*' (Luke xxi. 24) the door will be shut against them, as it now is against the Jews (Matt. xxv. 10).

Verse 26. And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

Then, that is at the second coming of Christ, the Jews will, as a body, become believers in the divine revelations, and so the prophecy of Isaiah quoted by the Apostle shall be fulfilled, and they, like the Gentiles, shall be saved, not by works, but by faith.

Verse 27. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

For although when his children forsake his law he visits them for their transgressions, his loving kindness, nevertheless, he does not utterly take from them, his covenant he does not break nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips (Psalm lxxxix. 30-34).

Verse 28. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes.

Under the present Gospel dispensation God *loves* the Gentile and *hates* the Jew in the same sense as it is said, '*Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*' He now shows favour to the Gentile and disfavour to the Jew, but, though in disgrace, the Jews have a warm place in their Father's heart. He *waits to be gracious*. Though they are now, like the prodigal son, in a far country, they are still beloved, and when they return to him he will return to them.

Verse 29. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

For God knows the end from the beginning, and '*he is not a man that he should repent.*'

Verse 30. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief:

Time was when the Gentiles were, on account of their sins, left to walk in darkness. It is as though God must have one child to love. The Jews had their time of love, but having rejected God, killed his prophets, slain his Son and cast him out of the vineyard, they are now left to walk in darkness, to eat of the fruit of their doings, and God turns to the Gentiles, who thus so to speak, gain at the expense of the Jew.

Verse 31. Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy.

But God's purpose is, that as the Gentiles have been blessed through the Jew, so the Jew is to be blessed through the Gentile, an opportunity being thus afforded them of exercising the divine grace of *mercy*.

Verse 32. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.

But now comes *the conclusion of the whole matter*: '*God hath concluded them all in unbelief,*' that is to say, the pleadings have been filed, the evidence has been put in—the case is closed and judgment is given. God, the Judge of all the earth, declares and proclaims that *all men, both Jew and Gentile, are guilty before him and have no hope except in Divine Mercy.*

The word '*concluded*,' is used three times in the Scriptures. Firstly, by the Apostles, when, after debating the question of whether or not the Gentiles should be required to submit to the rite of circumcision, they proceeded to pronounce judgment, declaring that, as touching the Gentiles which believe, '*we have . . . concluded,*' etc. (Acts xxi. 25).

Secondly, it is said, with regard to the doctrine of the natural corruption of the human heart, that '*the Scripture hath concluded all under sin*' (Gal. iii. 22); that is to say, the Scriptures, when appealed to, give this as their judgment or decision on the point.

Thirdly, in this passage it is set forth that God having applied to the human heart, the simplest, the most delicate, and yet the most infallible of all tests—viz., that of whether or not men have faith, '*Believest thou this?*' declares that none are found to have faith, and adjudges, therefore, that there is '*none righteous, no not one.*'

That faith is a *test*, and that this test was applied by our Lord, the following passages clearly show, viz., '*This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent*' (John vi. 29). '*He that believeth not is condemned already*' (John iii. 18). '*He that believeth not shall be damned*' (Mark xvi. 16). '*That they all might be damned who believed not*' (Thess. ii. 12). '*To whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?*' (Heb. iii. 18). '*An evil heart of unbelief*' (John xi. 42). '*That they may believe that thou hast sent me*' (John xi. 42). '*That the world may believe*' (John xvii. 21). '*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved*' (Acts xvi 31).

God, in thus pronouncing sentence of death on all, does not stop there. He is a God who delighteth in *Mercy*, and although none can by their own works put away sin, or purchase or procure, at their own cost, eternal blessedness, all or any may '*buy wine and milk without money and without price*'¹—all, who have ears to hear, may appropriate the promise, '*Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.*'²

Verse 33. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

How vast, how deep, how incomprehensible to human intelligence, are God's plans and purposes. Man cannot understand, comprehend, or imagine, how God can have permitted sin, not only to enter into the world, but to run its long and awful course through the Ages of Time; why he should have left it largely unchecked, seeing that it destroys the happiness, poisons the lives, torments and tortures the minds, bodies, and souls of countless millions of men, women, and children.

¹Isaiah lv. 1.

²Psalms lxxxi. 10.

Man concludes to reject or deny a God who thus acts; yet a wealth of unerring wisdom and infinite knowledge have been expended upon these matters, and although the objects in view, and the ways and means of attaining them, lie beyond the bounds of man's keenest research, yet in the end it will be seen and acknowledged that God is perfect in all his ways.

Verse 34. For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?

Even the highest created intelligences had no part in the counsels of Jehovah.

Verse 35. Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

And as God is not indebted to any creature, whether in heaven or earth, so none can turn him aside by so much as a hair's breadth from, much less defeat or mar, his aims, objects, plans, or purposes. God is the fountain and source, not only of material things, but of things intellectual and spiritual, and this will at last be seen, owned, and acknowledged, in and to, all eternity. A full display will then and there be made of the glorious and infinite perfections of the Triune Jehovah.

Verse 36. For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

With Amen—this I firmly and fully believe and receive—the Apostle closes this first portion of his Epistle, in which he has set forth the *doctrines* of the gospel he preached, going on in the next portion of the Epistle to deal with the *practical effect* of these doctrines on men's daily life, walk, and conversation, here below.

CHAPTER XII.

Verse 1. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Deeply, would the Apostle seem to say, am I impressed with the truth, revealed to us by God's Word and illustrated by God's providence, that man's sole reliance must be on God's *mercy*, and fervently do I desire that you may also clearly see and believe this truth; and that the fruits of your faith may be displayed by *all* the powers and faculties with which your bodies are endowed.

As the animals devoted to sacrifice were given to the priest, and by him were burned, their smoke going up to heaven, and thus no use was made of them for the pleasure or profit of their original proprietors, so our bodily powers should no longer be used for the pleasure or profit of our unregenerate nature (our dead husband, see Chapter VII.), but should be given over to Christ, by his Spirit to be used for the service, the pleasure, and the profit, of the Son of God (our new Husband); who has ascended up into heaven—whose Spirit is now in us—of whom we are living members—who is coming again to receive us to himself—and with whom we are to live for ever.

Our bodies belong to him as well as our spirits. In a sense the body seems to be, here below, the common property of both soul and spirit—the chrysalis husk is not yet shaken off, rolled away and turned to dust, as it will be in the grave. Yet no part of our being must be kept back—the whole of our being belongs to him who has bought us with his own blood—to withdraw any part from his ownership and control would not be acceptable to God, nor even reasonable according to human codes. A sacrifice *'shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein.'*¹

Verse 2. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

¹Lev. xxii. 21.

The things of this world and the people of this world have done us no lasting good, nor can they; why, then, should we aim at getting into line with them? why conform to their practices or principles? rather, seeing that these so often run counter to, come into collision with, the divine law, let us cross over, travel on a *different*, instead of trying to run on the same line—be *transformed* instead of *conformed*.

We are born again: the nature with which we (and all those chosen and called) were born into the world, is in a state of death, and that which we have within us is a new nature, and our lives should show this. Inward workings of the Spirit there may be, but of these our fellow men can know little and perhaps understand less—outward actions men can understand, and it is by these alone that *men* can form their judgment of what *we* really are.

It is, too, by our outward actions that men can form a judgment of *our* God—if, therefore, only for *his* honour and glory we ought so to walk as that men may have reason to acknowledge that God's will is good—that it is worthy of acceptance by man—that it cannot justly be found fault with or be shown to be contrary to man's real good and happiness.

Verse 3. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

It is a Scriptural injunction to '*Exhort one another*';¹ '*Freely ye have received, freely give*,'² said our Saviour. It is mock modesty and morbid humility which would hinder us from recognising and declaring that divine grace has given us light and knowledge which formerly we had not; or which would restrain us from exercising and making practical use, for the benefit of others, of what has been thus bestowed on us.

Others can see in us faults and failings which we cannot see in ourselves, and there should be a readiness to profit by what others thus have and we have not: '*Faithful are the wounds of a friend*.'³ '*Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil*.'⁴

On the Apostle Paul were bestowed such a special gift and such special opportunities as has the Commander-in-Chief of an army. His position and circumstances enabled him to take a wide

¹Heb. iii. 13; x. 25. ²Matt. x. 8. ³Prov. xxvii. 6. ⁴Psalms cxli. 5.

and comprehensive view of the whole situation. His calling was to point out to each fighting unit what were the dangers he had to guard against, and what the duties devolving upon him.

Happy is the soldier who has a general upon whom he can implicitly rely, and happy is the soldier who is so saturated with the spirit of obedience as to profit to the full by the knowledge and experience thus brought to bear upon him.

It is because grace, as to a sort of Commander-in-Chief, was given to Paul, that he does not hesitate to point out to those he is addressing, the grand danger to which they are exposed, that of pride and a spirit of self-exaltation, leading to a desire to be in some higher position than that to which they were called.

We should regard the injunctions of a practical character given here and elsewhere in the New Testament, not so much as commandments to be obeyed, as reminders of that which the Spirit himself has taught us, and as that which therefore we well know is our calling and duty; or as revelations given to us, additional to the one great revelation made to us in Christ, that God is love and has chosen us unto salvation.

It is on these grounds that Paul urges Believers to take a sober view of their circumstances, and to remember that all spiritual gifts and graces come from God, and are not the result of their natural capabilities or laborious efforts—and that they are communicated to us, in greater or less degree, as we are enabled by faith to see and apprehend, what is revealed to us by God, in the divinely inspired Scriptures of truth.

Verse 4. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

For God acts and works in grace as in nature—the one body has many members, but all members have not the same functions: but they minister the one to the other.

Verse 5. So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

And God's believing people, those who are united to Christ and have life through him, are one in him, and have all one aim and object in view (they all desire to serve God in their day and generation, and, in due time, to attain to the glorious blessedness which is their everlasting portion).

Verse 6. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;

Yet all have different paths of service, allotted and pointed out to them by God's providence, for which they are fitted and for which they are furnished, some being called to be *prophets*, that is, they are privileged to receive direct revelations from God—to see with the eyes of their mind what is God's truth, both as regards doctrine and practice.

Such are to regard themselves as channels through which God is pleased to communicate his will to others. This is a gift or privilege which, since the canon of Scripture was closed, has never been bestowed in regard to doctrine, except for purposes of exposition and interpretation, and not very frequently in regard to points of practice.

'*Prophecies, they shall fail,*'¹ and practically the gift of prophecy has disappeared. Nothing may be added to or taken away from the Scriptures. '*If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life.*'²

Verse 7. Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth on teaching;

Others are called to *minister*, to act as conveyors, stewards, distributors, it may be of their own substance, or of things provided or prepared by others—to act, for instance, as did the disciples when Jesus '*Gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude*';³ or as those who ministered to the saints, providing them with food, and lodging, and attendance, as they journeyed from place to place preaching the Gospel.

Others are called to teach, that is, to be conveyors and distributors of those Gospel truths and doctrines which they have themselves learned.

Verse 8. Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 8. ² Rev. xxii. 18-19. ³ Matt. xiv. 19.

Others are called to *exhort*, that is, to fan into a flame the sparks or smouldering fires of divine affection and desire. Others, again, are called to *give* of that which has been given to them, and this should be done without desiring or looking for reward, or the praise of men. Those who are called to *rule*, whether in the Church or State, are to do this well and diligently, albeit it is not directly spiritual work. He that is called to the *exercise of mercy*, forgiveness, or forbearance, should do it cheerfully, as has been said, '*whatever you do, do it gracefully.*'

Verse 9. Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

Love for that which is good should be genuine and unadulterated; hatred of that which is evil should be not less so. Christians should be good lovers, but good haters too, seeing and distinguishing clearly between what is right and what is wrong, and, whilst giving evil a wide berth, should cleave closely to, and support ardently, everything which is good; the Christian should not be lukewarm, '*neither cold nor hot.*'¹

Verse 10. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.

Loving all men, but specially those who are of the household of faith; delighting in the gifts and graces of others, rather than in their own.

Verse 11. Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.

Not neglecting or becoming slack in those worldly matters which relate to the getting of our daily bread. '*Six days shalt thou work and do all that thou hast to do,*' is still a standing order in the divine economy, and to be diligent in business is not inconsistent with keeping our '*eyes*' lifted '*unto the hills,*'² nor

¹Rev. iii. 15.

²Psalms cxxi. 1.

with our 'eyes' being '*ever toward the Lord*,'¹ nor with our serving him; which we may do as efficiently (or even more so) by our life as by our lips, by our example as by our preaching.

Verse 12. Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.

Ever rejoicing, in hope of the glorious things promised to those who, by *patient continuance in well-doing*, seek for glory and immortality. If called upon to suffer afflictions, losses, crosses, troubles, want, distress—such circumstances should be looked upon as sent designedly, as they certainly are, in order to give exercise to patience, to teach us to *bear pain*, as did our Lord, who, '*When he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not.*'²

Yet we may in prayer '*pour out our hearts before God.*'³ '*Is any among you afflicted? let him pray.*'⁴ We may make our complaints to him—

'With him sweet converse I maintain,
Great as he is I dare be free;
I tell him all my griefs and pain,
And he reveals his love to me.

'Some cordial from his word he brings
Whene'er my feeble spirit faints;
At once my heart revives and sings,
And yields no more to sad complaints.'

Verse 13. Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

If rich, and having earthly comforts, there should be distribution of superfluities, and not accumulation; a readiness to share with others the good things which it is our lot to possess, and which we may, and ought to, rejoice in.

Verse 14. Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not.

¹Psalm xxv. 15.

²1 Peter ii. 23.

³Psalm lxii. 8.

⁴James v. 13.

If persecuted and called to suffer, for righteousness' sake or because followers and disciples of Christ, we are not to avenge ourselves, but rather to see the Lord's hand in it. '*Shall we receive good at the hand of (as coming from) God, and shall we not receive evil,*'¹ as coming also from him? Are we not to acknowledge God in *all* our ways? Ought we not to be ready to say with David, '*Let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David.*'²

Verse 15. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

We should be ready at all times to give play to the divine grace of sympathy, when we can do nothing more, either for those who are lifted up with joy or who are cast down by sorrows.

Verse 16. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

We are ever to keep in view the fact that although we are here in different stations, and therefore relatively to each other not on an equality, and this by the appointment of divine providence, yet in God's sight the difference between rich and poor, high and low, is small indeed, for it relates only to our time on earth. Comparatively small importance should therefore be attached to such differences, or even to mental and intellectual endowments, '*For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.*'³

Verse 17. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

We are not to pay men back in their own coin, which it is the natural impulse of the fleshly nature to do. We should endeavour in all circumstances to give no good cause of offence, whether to our brethren or to the men of this world, in the transactions which we must have with them.

¹Job. ii. 10. ²2 Sam. xvi. 10. ³1 Cor. iii. 19.

Verse 18. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

If possible, although this is not always so, Believers are to live in peace with all men, with those who are Unbelievers as well as with those who are brethren in the Gospel.

Verse 19. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

But in any case, whilst possibly called upon to defend our own or the rights of others, we are not to seek to *punish* those who may in consequence be our enemies, we are to leave that entirely to God. It is his business to put the law in motion, not ours. The appointment of public prosecutor is in God's hands, and he calls upon him to proceed when and as he sees fit.

Verse 20. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

Under these circumstances, and all our matters being in good hands, we may safely, for ourselves and without fear of thereby doing harm instead of good, give full play to the graces of mercy and forgiveness, and in showing kindness to an enemy, feeding him if hungry, giving him drink if thirsty, we may perchance thereby bring him round to copy our example—his enmity may burn itself out in time, and he be disposed also to forgive and forget.

Verse 21. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Why should we allow our sweet temper to be soured by his evil temper? why allow our good to be spoiled by his bad?—how much better to drown and smother his evil deeds by our good actions.

Such are some of the fruits of a living faith—such are some of the outward and visible signs and marks that the divine life is working in, and with, the spirit of man.

CHAPTER XIII.

Verse 1. Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

The last chapter dealt with the mental and moral attitude of Believers, toward their fellow-believers—those who are members of the Church.

This chapter throws light on what the relations of the Believer should be, with men of this world.

Christ Jesus is, in a special sense, the God of his people, but he is also God *'over all.'*¹ *'By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.'*² *'He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding.'*³ *'The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men.'*⁴

Although the men of this world are rebels against and haters of God's government, yet he still rules over them in righteousness—dealing out to them, in his providence, both rewards and punishments. *'They have their reward,'*⁵ said our Lord, when speaking of the Pharisees, and this reward is of God.

Verse 2. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

Hence any, whether Believers or Unbelievers, who fall foul of those ordained in God's providence to rule and govern in the world, fall foul of divine arrangements, and if and when they do so, they suffer, and suffer righteously.

Verse 3. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.

¹Rom. ix. 5. ²Prov. viii. 15-16. ³Dan. ii. 21. ⁴Dan. iv. 32. ⁵Matt. vi. 2.

Rulers, though Unbelievers and men of this world, if they exercise their calling aright, as numbers of them do, are a blessing to be valued and rejoiced in; they are also a power to be submitted to and supported. Believers are not called upon to shun or to keep aloof from them, but cheerfully and heartily to support their authority. They may, too, rejoice in being thought and spoken well of by them.

Verse 4. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

Under such circumstances rulers and governors are a source of thankfulness and rejoicing to the godly, but if the laws and regulations laid down by them for the furtherance of good order and peace be disregarded or opposed by Believers, these ministers of God become, and rightly so, a source and cause of fear and distress to them, as much as under similar circumstances they are so to the Unbeliever; for the Ruler is vested by God, in his providence, with power to make laws, and also with power to punish those who fail or refuse to keep them.

Verse 5. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

Subjection to earthly Rulers or Governors is therefore not only a matter of expediency on the part of the Believer, but a matter of duty.

Verse 6. For for this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God's minister's, attending continually upon this very thing.

On these grounds rates and taxes should be cheerfully paid, for those who govern in God's world are as worthy of their wages and of their honours, as the labourer in the vineyard is, of his hire and his rewards.

Verse 7. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

A wide and comprehensive view in such matters is to be taken by the Believer, who although an heir of glory is, as yet, an inhabitant of the earth, and is bound, every whit as much as an Unbeliever or a man of this world, to conform, while in the world, to all its appointments, so long as they do not absolutely clash with or override things expressly required of his people by God, which for the most part they do not.

Verse 8. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

What a sense of relief and freedom it gives to feel that no one has any claim upon us, that all we *owe* has been paid, that every *liability* has been discharged. Such a state of things gives free play for the exercise of charity; every act of bestowal becomes, then, not a question of paying, but of giving—not of duty but of love—not of debt, but of grace. Then may the law be approached from the positive, instead of from the negative side. No longer ‘I must not do this,’ or ‘I must do that,’ but ‘*I delight to do thy will, Oh my God.*’¹

Verse 9. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Whosoever loves his neighbour as himself will not do any of those things which are forbidden by the law, whether in the nature of offences against his family, his life, his goods, his character, or his possessions.

¹Psalm xl. 8.

Verse 10. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Love in action does good and not ill to one's neighbour, in the same way as self-love does good and not ill to oneself; and love, therefore, fulfils positively, the same law which fear may do, negatively.

Verse 11. And that knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

All this is the invariable and proper effect on our hearts and lives of the revelation made to us, and believed by us, of God's sovereign grace and electing love; and this as certainly, as the inevitable and proper effect on our hearts and lives of trespasses and sins is, blindness to, and unbelief in, God's revelations.

Alas, there are too many Believers, who are believers, and yet have their eyes so little open to what through grace they are and have, that they are like those but half awake, who lie dozing in bed, instead of jumping up to the duties of the day. The time for our complete deliverance, for our emerging from the chrysalis condition approaches. We entered upon this condition when we believed, but we are soon to change it for something far better.

Verse 12. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

The period of incubation will soon be ended, and the time for soaring aloft is at hand. It is therefore fitting that we should be putting off the worm, and putting on the butterfly.

Verse 13. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

This is done by cultivating a consistent life, walk, and conversation—by abandoning, both overt acts of ill conduct, inward thoughts of evil, and feelings of bitterness.

Verse 14. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

And by putting on the Lord Jesus, that is, by cultivating a walk such as his, who when he was on earth went about doing good, and who was occupied in ministering to the wants and necessities of those around him, and not to the health, comfort, or happiness of his own human body.

CHAPTER XIV.

Verse 1. Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

In the first eleven chapters of the Epistle the Apostle dealt with *Christian doctrine*; in the twelfth chapter with *Christian practice*; in the thirteenth with the attitude of Believers to *those that are without*, that is, to the rulers, and other men of this world, with whom they must and do come into contact; and in this, the fourteenth chapter, he deals with what should be the attitude of Believers to *weak brethren*.

There are some who have been divinely enabled to believe in salvation by Jesus Christ, and that they are themselves of the number of the elect, and yet the eyes of their minds are so far from being fully opened, that they fail to see clearly or apprehend fully, the mind and will and purposes of God, and this particularly in regard to what are called the non-essentials of religion.

The Apostle does not commend or approve such a condition of mind and heart; though he calls them brethren, he styles them *weak brethren*; yet, although they are not to be given in to, or their views approved, they are to be borne with, and to be received as fellow-believers.

And it is not to be said to such, 'You must see eye to eye with us on these matters, you must think as we do, you must do as we do or we can have no fellowship with you.' These important points of difference must be judged between us and a full agreement come to, or we cannot walk further together in the things of God.' They are to be borne with and not to be disputed with.

Verse 2. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

The Apostle, however, in saying this, clearly has in mind differences respecting ceremonial, and not doctrinal matters. The everlasting Gospel must not be perverted—the foundation stone

is not to be moved—only one Gospel must be preached, and any preaching another Gospel than that which Paul preached, and which he has so fully expounded in his epistles, are not to be borne with or spoken of as *weak brethren*, but are to be held accursed (see Gal. i. 9).

This is shown by the illustrations he gives. First, he points out that some attach conscientious importance to what they eat; these maintain, as a matter of conscience, that nothing is to be held to be unclean, or by God's ordinance to be refrained from on that account, and this the Apostle himself believed to be the case.

On the other hand there are those who cannot see this; the directions on such subjects given by divine command to the Jews are so clear, and, it may seem, so consistent with refined sense and feeling, that they cannot conscientiously take up such bold ground; their minds are not as yet cleared on the subject of the ceremonial law; they are not yet fully emancipated from the swaddling clothes of spiritual infancy; hence they think it not right to eat this, and that they ought not to eat that.

Verse 3. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

One who is joyously delivered from this kind of bondage, and revels in the liberty of the Gospel, is tempted to despise, and, may be, to reject and separate from, those who have not yet attained to his condition of freedom. This, the Apostle points out, is not a proper spirit in which to indulge; if weak in the faith, they yet are Believers; and if received by the Lord himself, shall they not be received by his people? dare any say to God, as practically they do who refuse to receive any who are Believers, 'I am holier than thou'?

Verse 4. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

Whilst delighting in Christian fellowship, and desiring unity and community of spirit, we must remember that each Believer is

also an individual unit, having direct communication with the Lord himself, just as each of those rays of light, which together form one brilliant coruscation of glory, is a distinct and separate emanation from a single common centre.

We must remember, too, that servants, although together forming one common household, are each individually responsible to, and liable to be personally and directly dealt with, by one common master. Whilst all serve one master, and each is accountable to him, it is not the calling or duty of one servant to lord it over another, or to reward or punish his fellow-servant, for services rendered, or dereliction of duties owing, to their common master.

There is a distinction between what is due to one another, and what is due to God; we *may* call one another to account for the former, but not for the latter. If a man fails in his duties to God, *He* will look after his own affairs, and either set his servant right wherein he errs, or keep him right in spite of his errors. So much for eating.

Verse 5. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

Another matter of ceremonial duty, also a relic of Judaism, is the *keeping of days*; but this also is a matter between master and servant, and not between fellow-servants, and should be referred, therefore, to God, who will either enlighten him who is in error, or preserve him from being endangered thereby. Yet it is a matter of grave importance, and not one to be lightly regarded, and every man should earnestly seek for divine guidance in reference to such points.

Verse 6. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

If of two Believers, one conceives it to be according to the divine mind, and finds it to be profitable, to set apart certain days for certain spiritual exercises, whilst another, neither sees it to be ordained of God, nor conducive to spiritual health and happiness, thus to be guided in his use of time by set rules; if both, in acting as they do, have their eyes upon God, and are intent on walking so as to please him, it being, after all, a matter affecting themselves and not their Lord, they are not called upon to find fault with one another.

Or, again, in the matter of eating, if of two Believers one believes it to be right and profitable to impose restrictions upon himself in regard to what he eats, while another sees no call for any set rules upon such a matter—since they alike acknowledge God as the giver of all good things, whether they eat or refrain from eating—this, also, is a matter affecting themselves, and not their common Lord, who takes little account of such trivialities. With him it is not a matter of outward appearance or doings, but of the condition and emotions of the heart. In this again, therefore, there is no call to find fault with one another.

Verse 7. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

Such matters should not break, or be allowed to mar, unity and fellowship between those who are children of God and therefore brethren, and who while alive in the body live as parts of a great whole, and who when they die will still be members of the great body of Believers, who are all one in Christ. *'Part of the host have crossed the flood and part are crossing now.'*

Verse 8. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

For whilst we live, our calling is to please, serve, and glorify our Lord; and if we die, it is that we may be *'for ever with the Lord,'* in order to closer communion, higher service, and perfected joy.

What we have to keep in mind therefore, and what will tend to keep us together, is, that we are not our own; that come life or come death we are the Lord's; and in measure as we are in union and unity with him, we shall be in union and unity with one another.

Verse 9. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

And if I am his, he is mine. If he died for our sins, he rose that we might be justified, and lives that we may live. He was Lord and Master when on earth, and he will be Lord and Master in heaven. Those who died with him on the cross were also raised together with him. *'He'll not be in glory and leave me behind,'* and may we not in humble hope add, *'Nor my belongings'?* for so it was commanded concerning his people Israel, *'There shall not an hoof be left behind.'*¹

Verse 10. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Whilst in matters of doctrine we are to be steadfast in the faith, we are not, in matters of ritual, outward observances, or customs, to sit in judgment upon our brethren; nor is there to be separation amongst brethren on such grounds.

Although *'We SHALL judge angels,'*² we are not yet raised to the bench. Whilst in the body, and until we have appeared before the judgment seat of Christ, we are, like the rest of mankind, prisoners awaiting trial, and it ill becomes such to be occupied in passing judgments one upon another, and still less to be visiting one another with pains and penalties.

Verses 11 and 12. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

That all, whether Jew or Gentile, young or old, Believer or Unbeliever, that every individual of the human race will appear before the judgment seat of Christ, is made absolutely certain by the revelation thus made through the prophet Isaiah.

Very little is made known to us respecting the eternal state, but this much is clear, that before entering upon it, each and all will have to render an account, in the next world, of his doings in this.

¹Ex. x. 26.

²1 Cor. vi. 3.

Verse 13. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

Seeing, therefore, what our position and condition here on earth is—that of untried prisoners awaiting our turn to go, as it were, into the dock, there to hear the case made against us, and the evidence for and against us presented, as it will be, by him who prosecutes, and by him who defends—it behoves us to lie low meanwhile at least, and it ill becomes us to be occupied with the sins and shortcomings of others rather than with our own.

Rather ought we to occupy such time as remains to us in helping one another, and in removing causes of offence, which can only serve to add to or aggravate what may be charged against them and us.

Verse 14. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

But to return to these matters of ceremonial and ritual, such as that of eating or refraining from eating, Paul, as a well instructed and zealous Jew, no doubt at one time attached every importance to such matters, and it would appear that the habits and customs of his earlier days were not easily abandoned, for he had to be persuaded thereto by the Lord Jesus; what wonder, then, that those who have not been thus graciously released from bondage should cling with pertinacity to the grave clothes of a dead past.

Paul's mind was, however, now clear on such points; he did not *think*, or *believe*, he *knew* that ceremonial cleanness or uncleanness was a thing of the past, and wholly done away with: nevertheless he would have tenderness and forbearance exercised towards any who had not yet attained to like clearness of view.

On such matters, indeed, he goes further, urging that in cases such as these, conviction and action should keep to their proper places, action following conviction and not preceding it, that

thereby a tenderness of conscience may be cultivated; for so long as a man conscientiously believes a practice of this kind to be binding upon him, even although as a truth it is not, yet if he cannot abandon it without wounding his conscience, he ought not, and ought not to be expected, to do so.

Verse 15. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

But one's own liberty is not to be paraded or pushed so far as to offend or grieve the sensitiveness of a weak brother; love and kindness to one another are of vastly greater importance than the proclamation, operation, and enforcement of what, as regards carnal ordinances, is seen by us to be according to truth.

Any whom we recognize to be those for whom Christ died, and therefore to be his children, are not, so far as in us lies, to be destroyed or cast out because they cannot walk as fast as we, keep pace with us, or reach the heights which, through grace, we ourselves may have attained to.

Verse 16. Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

Doubtless the Apostle perceived through the Spirit how matters and questions of this character would agitate and convulse the church, and how difficult even Believers would find it to be, to give to questions of ritual their proper proportions; and how those most enlightened, and as clear in their views of truth as he himself was, might do harm instead of good by expecting everyone to act up to their own light, in regard to what, in Scriptural language, may be called '*things carnal*.'

It cannot, however, be too clearly borne in mind that '*things spiritual*' stand on a platform altogether different; these he dealt with in the earlier chapters of the Epistle; in this he is dealing almost wholly with things carnal, or what, in modern phraseology, are termed things non-essential.

Verse 17. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Union with Christ, and subjection to his dominion, in thought, word, or deed, are not affected by what we eat or by what we drink, and are not dependent upon conformity to external practices of any kind, yet they show themselves in uprightness of life, in outward and inward peace, and in that spiritual joyfulness which the being indwelt by the Holy Ghost cannot fail to produce.

Verse 18. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

It may be said of those who in these ways and in this manner reflect the glory of the Lord, and promote the growth and spread of his kingdom, that they please God; such fruits of faith God accepts and man approves.

Verse 19. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

As in military manœuvres, a general idea of the operations proposed to be undertaken is given to the troops for their guidance on a field day, so the Apostle lays it down that a Believer, in his intercourse with his fellow-Believers, should make it his study to avoid causes of friction, that he should cultivate what will make for peace, that he should aim at building up rather than at pulling down, at exhortation rather than at controversy, at drawing rather than at driving.

But these directions again have reference to carnal things, non-essentials. They do not enjoin connivance at heresy, nor acquiescence in false doctrine.

Verse 20. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

By no means should things temporal be allowed to injure or destroy things spiritual; not that we are to go back to the low place others may be in, but we are not to insist or expect that others, in carnal things, must or will take our view or follow our example, unless and until, like us, they are fully persuaded.

Verse 21. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

Again the Apostle urges and repeats that our views and practice in regard to ritual are not to be so promulgated as to irritate or cause to stumble a *Brother*—although this does not mean that our views and practice are to be shaped with an eye to pleasing or not displeasing *Unbelievers*.

Verse 22. Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

Nor are we to shape our own views and practice in regard to ritual with an eye to pleasing or not displeasing our brother; but we are not to flaunt them before him, but to be thankful if, with a good conscience, we can rejoice in our liberty.

Verse 23. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

In no case are we in such matters to act on the views of others. Each should act up to the light he himself has; for if a man go in advance of what he has been taught, of what has been revealed to himself, of what he has by faith himself apprehended, he is guilty of sin.

Although as between ourselves and our fellow-men such matters are trivial and unimportant, they are not so as between ourselves and God.

CHAPTER XV.

Verse 1. We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

In the last chapter the Apostle had in mind the '*weak brethren*'; in this he has in view the '*strong brethren*'; and he includes himself amongst these, for he says, *we* that are strong.

A man with great powers, whether of mind or body, may find intense delight, to himself, in exercising them, and doubtless powers grow and increase by exercise; but too rapid growth has its dangers.

In its early years a young horse is often found to be deformed and misshapen, one side being out of proportion to the other, but later, nature sets this right—it is only the result of too rapid growth.

A vine suffered to grow unchecked would soon become unfruitful and bear '*nothing but leaves*.' Divine Wisdom, in tending the trees of God's planting, has an eye to this danger. Luther was at one period of his life forcibly removed from the arena of religious warfare and shut up in the solitude of a gloomy fortress. Bunyan was suspended from the exercise of his gifts of preaching, when at the zenith of his fame, and for years was confined in a lonely prison.

A clergyman found himself one Sunday evening engaged in the strange occupation of carrying hods of coal from the cellar to the top story of his lofty vicarage. What a strange providence ! he said to himself. In ordinary circumstances I should at this time be in my church, preaching to a thousand people, and at this moment, the people are there, hungering and thirsting to hear the Word, whilst I, who am longing to proclaim it to them, am employed instead in shovelling coal ! But, said he, praise the Lord, it is all right, he knows best—the work he gives me is the work I like best to do.

The fact was that serious illness had broken out among his large family of children. He had himself been ill and was not yet convalescent. He had therefore to stay in. But coal being wanted in the sick room he had, in order to relieve the nurse, turned to and was carrying it up, acting on the Scriptural principle, '*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might*.'¹

Possibly all of these were, either like the young horse,

¹Eccles. ix. 10.

growing too rapidly and out of proportion, or like the vine, growing too luxuriantly, and therefore were for a time appointed to minister otherwise than by preaching.

Or, may be, the Lord was dealing with them as he dealt with his disciples when they *'told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile.'*¹ They did rest, but it was resting from *their* labours in order that they might see *his* works in feeding the five thousand and in stilling the storm.

The calling of those *'that are strong'* is to utilize their powers in the direction of helping others who have them not, that thus there may be equality, as in the case of the manna, where, *'He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack,'*² and often this means a coming down, a suspending of one's gifts, *'to the weak becoming weak.'*³

Our Lord himself tasted of this experience, and as the result was taunted as though he were without power. *'Physician, heal thyself,'*⁴ *'If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross,'*⁵ *'If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.'*⁶ But he did not reply, only saying, for his disciples' sake, *'Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels.'*⁷

Verse 2. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.

It should then be our study, and we should address ourselves to showing kindness to those with whom in God's providence we are day by day brought into contact, but withal wise kindness, seeking not merely to please but to profit them.

Verse 3. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

Thus following in the steps of our Lord, who when he was on earth went about doing good, not living for himself but for others, and this notwithstanding that it brought him into contempt and unpopularity.

¹Mark vi. 30-31. ²2 Cor. viii. 15. ³1 Cor. ix. 22. ⁴Luke iv. 23.

⁵Matt. xxvii. 40. ⁶John vii. 4. ⁷Matt. xxvi. 53.

Verse 4. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

And this is not a calling or an experience peculiar to New Testament times, for it was preached and practised by those who prophesied of Christ; indeed, the Old Testament is full of the sayings and doings of those who thus walked, and they are recorded in the Scriptures for the express purpose of encouraging us to walk patiently in these paths of unselfishness, and in order to comfort us amidst the trials and afflictions which such a walk in this world will infallibly entail; to fill us, too, with hope and expectation in regard to the life that is to come.

Verse 5. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

Here the Apostle breaks off into an ejaculatory prayer, beseeching that the God who calls for patience, but who yet sustains and comforts, will incline and enable the Believers in Rome, and Believers everywhere, to behave themselves to their neighbours, and especially to those that are '*weak*,' as Christ Jesus acted towards those with whom when on earth he came into contact.

Verse 6. That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That thus the divine life and character may be exhibited in all its beauty, and the perfections of Christ be seen in his people, as the perfections of God the Father are seen in God the Son.

Verse 7. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

The meaning of the word *receive*, as used here, is very comprehensive, and its use, in the same sense, is not unknown either in church or social circles. The following passages of Scripture emphasize its comprehensiveness:—‘*The natural man RECEIVETH not the things of the Spirit of God*’ (1 Cor. ii. 14). ‘*Heard that the Gentiles had also RECEIVED the word of God*’ (Acts xi. 1). ‘*They RECEIVED the word with all readiness*’ (Acts xvii. 11). ‘*They were RECEIVED of the Church*’ (Acts xv. 4). ‘*Diotrephes . . . RECEIVETH us not*’ (3 John 9). ‘*He that receiveth you RECEIVETH me*’ (Matt. x. 40).

The Believers attitude towards other Believers with whom he may differ on points of practice, and even on points of doctrine, has been a matter which has ever perplexed and vexed the Church. Here is a compass to steer by. Believers are to receive one another (that is to say fellow-Believers) *as Christ received sinners*.

And how did Christ receive sinners? Did he ever refuse to receive a sinner? Did his reception of them depend on their merits or demerits? on their condition either of mind, heart, or life? Did he separate from them in the sense of objecting to their presence, or of being seen in their company, or of eating with them, if thereby he could do them good, either in things temporal or in things spiritual? Did not his heart go out towards all sinners?

Believers, then, should never refuse to receive one who is also a Believer—nor allow his reception of fellow-Believers to depend on their merits or demerits, on their condition of mind, heart, or life. Believers should never separate themselves from those who are also Believers, or refuse to unite with them, in feeding upon the Word, or in Christian fellowship, for any cause, and certainly not because they are of a lower rank in church society—say Dissenters and not Churchmen—if thereby they can do them good.

Christians naturally and rightly feel strongly on matters of religious doctrine and practice; they are rightly jealous of the honour of their Lord; but often they have been guided by these holy motives instead of by the directions given in the Scriptures, and as the result have acted in such matters as they never would have done had their course been steered by this divinely given compass.

Verse 8. Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:

The dissensions among Believers prevailing in the apostolic times, and which suggested and called forth the directions given in the earlier verses of this chapter, were between Jewish and Gentile believers, the former apparently objecting to *receive* the latter; and it is to this point the Apostle now addresses himself.

Jesus, he says, was clearly a Jew, and as a Jew conformed both to the moral and ceremonial Law, thus giving his imprimatur to the '*Law given by Moses*,' and thereby proclaiming it to be of divine ordination and origin. The blessings foretold in this inspired book were clearly to be the portion of the Jews, for they were ensured to them by specific and absolute promises made to their fathers on their behalf.

Verse 9. And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name.

But they were equally to be the portion of the Gentiles, and were as specifically and absolutely ensured to them as to the Jews; not, indeed, *by promise* as they were to the Jews, but *by way of prophecy*; and this the Apostle proves by quoting from the writings of Moses, David, and Isaiah, viz. :—

Verse 10. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people.

So spake Moses.

Verse 11. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people.

So spake David.

Verse 12. And again, Esaias saith, there shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

So spake Isaiah.

In God's purposes, therefore, there was to be no difference between Jewish and Gentile Believers, and Jesus when on earth showed this by receiving and having dealings with publicans and sinners—Samaritans and Greeks—he healed all that came to him, and refused none that needed him, saying, '*Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden.*'

Yet the Apostle was well aware, through the enlightenment of the Holy Ghost if not by direct revelation of the Lord himself, that there would in practice be great difficulty in eradicating the racial differences between Jew and Gentile—the difficulty which in our day we see exemplified, or, rather, illustrated, in the case of the English and the Irish, the British and the Boer. The Jew, he foresaw, would find it difficult to shake himself free from the habits of thought and practice engendered by the ceremonial law; the Gentile would be impatient and intolerant of such old-world notions.

Yet as Christ *received* both Jew and Gentile, so he urges that Jew and Gentile Believers should receive each other, and walk in love, even although while here below this may mean bearing with and exercising forbearance toward, one another.

Verse 13. Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

And we must be content with this condition of things for the time being; but not for always, because a hope of better things, of a complete and full deliverance from all that is doubtful and obscure, is set before us in the Gospel, and is made secure to us by the promise of God, who is for this reason spoken of by the Apostle as the God of Hope. Well and with reason may we sing, '*Still, there's more to follow—more and more, always more to follow.*'

Present joy comes through believing, but there are also the joys of expectation and hope, and the Apostle prays that the Holy Ghost will give to those he is addressing such views of the glories *promised* to them, that they may, through hope, be as full of the blessedness arising from future expectation, as they are of the blessedness arising from present joy.

Verse 14. And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

And in writing thus he does not do so by way of reproof or fault finding; he has no reason to suppose that those he is addressing have been going astray in these respects. On the contrary, he has every reason to believe that they are full of God's good things, that they have light and knowledge, and are quite able to guide and direct one another aright; yet the Apostle knew well that it is quite possible to see clearly for others what is right, and yet not to be so clear as to what is right for oneself.

Verse 15. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God.

Hence he thinks it well to put on record what the Believer's practical attitude should be towards all men, that is, towards the men of this world, and towards their fellow-Believers, whether they be *weak brethren* or *strong brethren*. How useful we often find it to be to have *written directions* to refer to, in cases of difficulty and perplexity; and this is what these apostolic exhortations are to the Believer.

The Apostle, being particularly and specially called to be a *preacher*, a setter forth to others of truth, both doctrinal and practical, does not hesitate to remind them *in this way* of what he is well aware they *already knew*. All the Apostles did the same, and wrote as they did, not so much for the purpose of illumination, as by way of reminder.

John says, '*Ye need not that any man teach you,*'¹ '*I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth.*'² Peter says, '*I will not be negligent to put you always in REMEMBRANCE of these things, though ye know them,*'³ '*This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of REMEMBRANCE.*'⁴

All Believers, all those truly enlightened by the Holy Ghost, have knowledge, '*Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things*';⁵ but it is not always *available*, either because our judgment is *beclouded*, or because it is *dormant*, '*When thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness,*'⁶ '*It is high time to awake out of sleep.*'⁷

The photographer takes a likeness, and has it in his possession immediately the slide has been closed after his camera has been brought to bear upon its subject, yet unless and until that which has been, by the action of light, impressed upon the

¹ John ii. 27. ² John ii. 21. ³ Peter i. 12. ⁴ Peter iii. 1.

⁵ 1 John ii. 20. ⁶ Luke xi. 34. ⁷ Rom. xiii. 11.

plate, is developed and printed, it is for practical purposes non-existent. By the illuminating power of the Holy Ghost the likeness of the Lord Jesus, the Light of the World, has been imprinted on every Believer. This the Apostles knew; the aim and object of their exhortations was therefore to develop and bring out in Believers this likeness, so that '*the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*,'¹ might be shown forth in the lives of his people.

Verse 16. That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

And having been specially commissioned to preach to the Gentiles, the Apostle does not hesitate, although he has not yet seen or spoken to the Believers in Rome, or at least not to many of them, to, in writing, *follow up*, carry on and perfect the work *begun* in them by God (who alone has creative power), thus exercising his calling, which was that of a servant of Jesus Christ—if so be that such of them as were crucified with Christ, and through the Holy Ghost made partakers of his resurrection life, might show forth on earth the glory of God.

Verse 17. I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God.

It is in being a servant of Jesus Christ, a developer and printer off of his 'negatives,' that Paul glories. He delights in being occupied and engaged on earth in the things of God, in being a fellow-labourer with him in saving men from eternal destruction.

Verse 18. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,

He would not dare to arrogate to himself the power to *give* life, a power which belongs to God alone. Every work of grace, whether in Jew or Gentile, is *begun* by Jesus Christ, and he it is who reduces rebellious man to obedience of lip and life.

Verse 19. Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ.

And this had been made abundantly clear during the course of his missionary tour; for mighty signs, wonders, and miracles, such as only divine power could work, had confirmed the truth in this respect. This he had fully preached, proclaiming Christ and him crucified to be the alone source of everlasting life, the well of salvation, which, springing up, first, in Jerusalem, had subsequently flowed over into the regions beyond. And that stream is flowing still, and will continue to flow till it has covered the earth as the waters cover the seas.

*'And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.'*¹

Verse 20. Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation;

His work hitherto had been that of making known the principles and facts, so to speak, of religious photography, rather than that of developing and printing off its creations. He had been preaching, setting forth, the foundation truth, the good news, that God had amongst the Gentiles, also a chosen people; that the Gentiles as well as the Jews might look to be receivers of the Holy Ghost; and he had endeavoured to fulfil the mission on which he was thus sent, even to the extent of leaving on one side believing Jews, lest in preaching to them he should be neglecting his own sphere, and be poaching upon ground properly belonging to others.

Verse 21. But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

¹Rev. xxii. 1-2.

And in justification of this he points out what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah,¹ foretelling that messengers should be sent whose calling it would be, not to cultivate ground, already planted, but to open up fresh ground, and to sow and plant that which before was desert—barren and unfruitful.

Verse 22. For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.

His heavy, continuous, and extended labour, in the execution of his mission, that of preaching the principles and facts of the divine life, was the reason he had not ere this visited the Believers in Rome.

Verse 23. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you:

But now his work and mission in the parts about Jerusalem is drawing to a close; he has finished the work given him to do there; and he is free to do that which for many years he has desired to do, to pay to the Believers in Rome a visit, for purposes of, by word of mouth, development and printing off.

Verse 24. Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.

His plan, he announces, is to pass through Rome on his way to Spain, and he looks forward to being so refreshed and re-animated by a time of converse and communion with them, that he may be encouraged by their Christian fellowship to set forth afterwards upon more, pioneering work in the regions beyond.

Verse 25. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.

¹Isaiah lii. 15.

But before actually starting for Rome, he has, he says, first, once again, to visit Jerusalem.

Verse 26. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

For the purpose of conveying pecuniary assistance to Jewish Believers in distress there—their Gentile fellow Believers in Macedonia and Achaia having made certain contributions in aid of their distress.

Verse 27. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

Both pleasure and duty have prompted them in this matter. They recognize that as Gentiles they have, out of Jewish fulness, been made partakers of spiritual blessings, and now that Jewish Believers are in temporal distress, they feel that they are called upon, and ought, of their carnal abundance, to minister to Jewish carnal necessities.

Verse 28. When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

So soon as this commission is executed and he has completed this interesting transaction, he purposes to start for Spain, and to take them *en route*.

Verse 29. And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

And his hopes are high that he will have a good time with them.

Verse 30. Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;

To which end he invites them to unite with him in presenting to God in prayer certain specific requests.

Verse 31. That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judæa; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;

The first being that he may be delivered from the slanders, and possibly violence, to which he will be exposed in Judæa, owing to the enmity and hatred of unbelievers there. He is aware that he is still in an enemy's country, as it is written, '*Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations,*'¹ and, '*I walk in the midst of trouble.*'²

The second request being, that nothing may be permitted to mar or interfere with the pleasing effect which the bestowal of the gifts he is carrying to Jerusalem is calculated to produce.

Verse 32. That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.

The third request being that in due time and course he may reach Rome, and have with them a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

Verse 33. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

Meanwhile he prays that the God of peace may be with them all—that He will vouchsafe to them a time of calm and sunshine, undisturbed by those stormy and contrary currents which often, for long together, beset and distress the Believer while sojourning in this vale of tears. With Amen, may this be so, he concludes the chapter.

¹Psalms lxxiv. 4.

²Psalms cxxxviii. 7.

CHAPTER XVI.

Verse 1. I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:

While Paul had never yet been in Rome, and was therefore not personally acquainted with the great body of those to whom this epistle was addressed, yet it would appear that a certain number of individuals whom he did personally know now resided there; probably all of those thus known to him, being twenty-nine in number, are in this chapter referred to by name.

To the hospitality of these and of the other Saints in Rome he commends Phebe, whom he introduces as a Sister in Christ, probably she held some semi-public official position in the Corinthian Church at Cenchrea, but, having occasion to visit or remove to Rome, she is commissioned to be the bearer of this letter—a document which, although not emblazoned on silk and parchment, with no profusion of seals and signatures, merely a letter signed ‘Paul,’ was yet a document more important in character than any treaty ever signed by kings or ambassadors, and was destined throughout the ages of time, to move and influence the whole race of mankind.

Verse 2. That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.

He asks that she may be received, not on account of her personal worth or charms, or official position, but because she is, as the Apostle testifies, one of the divine family, and is a saint coming among saints—one of those, like themselves, ‘*chosen unto salvation.*’ And he goes on to beg that she may be assisted in the *affairs of time* upon which she is at the moment engaged; that as she has of her carnal abundance ministered in time past to many saints, as well as to the Apostle personally, so such carnal needs as she may now have, may be supplied by them.

Verse 3. Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus:

He bears in mind those who in the past helped him, not because he paid them for their services, but who rendered him service because his Lord was their Lord.

Verse 4. Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.

Priscilla and Aquila, to whom he first sends greeting, had gone through critical times with him, and had even risked their own lives to save his. They had been associated with him in the planting of churches in all parts of Greece among the Gentiles, and by their faithful and devoted labours they had given cause for thankfulness to all of these, as well as to the Apostle personally.

We first hear of them as being at Corinth, whither they had been driven from Rome by Claudius. At Corinth they met Paul and had worked with him at tent-making, subsequently travelling with him to Ephesus.

At Ephesus they were instrumental in '*expounding the way of God more perfectly*' to Apollos, a man endowed with great natural gifts of eloquence, and well instructed in '*the righteousness which is in the law*,'¹ but, until he met Aquila and Priscilla, ignorant of '*the righteousness which is of God by faith*.'²

Verse 5. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well-beloved Epænetus, who is the first-fruits of Achaia unto Christ.

This useful and gifted couple appear to have at length returned to Rome and gathered a company of Believers in their own home—a company referred to by Paul as a '*church*,' although meeting in a private house, and unconnected with any sacred or consecrated building devoted to ecclesiastical purposes or religious uses.

To this company of Believers, of which doubtless he had heard much collectively, he sends greeting, referring to a number

¹Phil. iii. 6. ²Phil. iii. 9.

of individuals among them who were personally known to him, the first of those being Epænetus, one of the early converts in Achaia, and whom he continued to regard with affectionate interest.

Verse 6. Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.

The next is Mary, a Sister whose labours in the past, as one of the early pioneers in Christian work, he remembers with grateful feeling.

Verse 7. Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

Then Andronicus and Junia, relatives of his own, who in time past had suffered imprisonment with him and who, he says, were looked up to, even by the Apostles, as tried and experienced Believers—indeed, they had started on pilgrimage before himself.

Verse 8. Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord.

Then Amplias, another Believer, and dear to him on that account.

Verse 9. Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.

Urbane was another who had helped in the things of the Lord, and Stachys, one doubtless beloved on this account, but also, probably, for some natural graces, rendered all the more delightful through the refining effects of spiritual grace.

Verse 10. Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household.

Apelles he speaks of as one whose soundness and profoundness in the things of Christ had earned for him cordial approval and respect.

He desires to be remembered to such of the household of Aristobulus as were Believers. Some were, some were not—possibly the head of the household had, as yet, himself given no evidence of being one, of those '*chosen unto life*.' This may serve to remind us of what is very marked throughout all his epistles, viz., that the Apostle is addressing himself to Believers, and not to a general congregation of those professing Christianity.

Verse 11. Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.

Herodion, a kinsman, he greets; also such of the household of Narcissus as were amongst those '*chosen and called*.'

Verse 12. Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord.

Tryphena and Tryphosa he remembers as diligent labourers in the Lord's vineyard: also Persis, beloved for her graces, and admirable, too, as a diligent labourer.

Verse 13. Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine.

Rufus was one whom the Apostle evidently believed to be one of the Elect, although he may not have given evident tokens of being called as yet; or possibly he was one whom the Apostle could not doubt had been chosen of the Lord, although not one who would have been chosen of man. Sometimes *spiritual* grace is present where *natural* grace is absent, and here spiritual insight is needed to recognize that such an one is really a brother.

The mother of Rufus he greets as being his mother, because the mother of a Brother.

Verses 14 and 15. Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them. Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.

He sends greetings to ten others whom he personally knows as well as to the many Saints with them, whom as yet he does not know even by name.

Verse 16. Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.

All those whom he thus affectionately salutes, and to whom he would gladly do acts of kindness and love, he exhorts to love one another, and to display their love by outward actions as well as by inward feeling, by *kiss* as well as by *look and regard*; and he assures them that such a spirit of love, both passive and active, is entertained towards them, by all the churches he has planted and watered among the Gentiles.

Verse 17. Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

Yet he is aware and recognizes that amongst the wheat the devil has already sowed tares, and that those amongst them who fail to exhibit the graces of love and unity, and who create instead dissensions and divisions, thereby give indication that they are not '*of us*,' and such, he says, should be avoided and fought shy of.

Verse 18. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

These, it will be found (and eventually this will be apparent to all), are self-seekers, occupied with their own interests—have not a single eye—are not solely bent on serving Christ and forwarding his interests in the world.

Alas! that such should be able to lead others astray—that those who are born to be *followers* and not *leaders* should come across, and be exposed to, the baneful influence of those who by good words and fair speech deceive and lead them into snares, traps, and pitfalls, prepared for their entanglement and destruction by the great enemy of souls. *'It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!'*¹

Verse 19. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

The Apostle ends up as he began by rejoicing in their *'obedience of faith'*; that they are Believers in the things revealed to them of God, that they are resting on what Jesus Christ has done, is doing, and will do for them, and not on their own doings as deserving of meritorious reward.

It is this feature in their spiritual character which has excited such widespread interest and such admiring wonder among the churches; and it is this which so delighted the Apostle himself.

Yet he would desire that they may be eminent, too, for their good works, and for their innocence of evil deeds; for that *'ceasing to do evil and learning to do well,'* which emanates from, and is the proper fruit of, a living faith.

Verse 20. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

He is well aware that for a time yet the struggle between good and evil must go on, but even the Thirty Years' War came at last to an end, and a reign of universal peace succeeded to those years of strife and bloodshed; and God, who delights in peace, and who, although *'a man of war,'* calls war, destruction, and judgment his *'strange work,'*² will, by the complicated

¹Matt. xviii. 7.

²Isaiah xxviii. 21.

apparently conflicting, yet perfect workings of his providence, in the end put down the hostile rule and authority now wielded in the world by Satan and his emissaries.

That the blessedness attaching to those who are partakers of the new life which is '*hid with Christ in God*' may be theirs, and that they may know it to their comfort, is his concluding prayer for them; and he ends up with the formulary with which the Apostles were in the habit of closing their letters, as we do ours with, 'Yours affectionately,' etc., etc.

Verse 21. Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.

But he opens the closed letter to add the greetings of eight others to his own—he says that Timothy, closely associated with him in Gospel labours, with Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, his relatives, desire also to be remembered to them.

Verse 22. I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord.

Tertius, the actual penman of the epistle (for Paul, through his '*thorn in the flesh*,' could not write much with his own hand, and had therefore done so by dictation), desired to be remembered too, not on the ground of kinship, or friendship, or even acquaintance, to none of which could he lay claim, but as being also a Believer in their common Lord.

Verse 23. Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.

Gaius, in whose house the Apostle writes, and whose hospitality he at the time enjoyed, seeing and hearing of what was on hand, begs to be allowed to send greetings also, while Erastus the City Chamberlain, coming in at the moment with Quartus, another brother, begs also to be remembered.

Verse 24. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Once more he adds the accustomed closing formula.

Verse 25. Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began.

But loth to close his letter, and lifted up in spirit by the wonderful things he has in his epistle, by revelation, communicated to them, he adds a postscript, breaking forth once more into a rapturous expression of confidence in that divine power, which, as at the beginning when '*He spake and it was done,*' now, through so simple an instrumentality as that of preaching, is able not only to begin but to carry on, not only to carry on but to complete, not only to give life but to maintain, not only to maintain but to perfect.

This was what the Apostle had before him when he said '*We preach Christ crucified . . . the power of God, and the wisdom of God,*'¹ and when he called the simple proclamation of Good News '*the power of God unto salvation.*'² This was Paul's gospel; not a setting forth of good and evil, accompanied by exhortations, persuasions, and threatenings—a call to '*do this and thou shalt live,*' but the revelation of that plan of salvation which, though kept secret since the world began, was planned and ordained before its foundation.

Verse 26. But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

Although only now made manifest. But now that it is plainly and fully revealed, now that the veil of mystery and secrecy is torn down, all nations, as was foretold by the prophets in the Scriptures, are to be called to the '*obedience of faith.*'

¹ 1 Cor. i. 23-24.

² Rom. i. 16.

How strange, yet how simple, is gospel truth! What God's Justice requires, and what Man would fain give, is the '*obedience of works*.'

God says: Do this and thou shalt live. The soul that sinneth it shall die.

Man. We will serve the Lord, for he is our God.

God. Ye cannot serve the Lord (acceptably).

Man. Nay, but we will serve the Lord.

God. Go, then, and do your best.

Such were the sayings of God and Man as recorded in Joshua xxiv. and other parts of the Old Testament; but what ages of time have been occupied in elaborating and expounding the details of this dramatic dialogue—in setting forth God's requirements, and in demonstrating man's inability to comply with them!

What a multitude of characters have taken part in this solemn *play*! what myriads of witnesses have been called into existence, have passed on and off the stage of time, for the purpose of showing what ought to be but cannot be!

And then, when the curtain had fallen, and the case was proved to be hopeless, the attainment of man's ideal impossible—what is '*impossible with man*' turns out after all to be '*possible with God*.'

Verse 27. To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

It is a momentary view of the infinite wisdom, power, and love of the triune Jehovah, the everlasting God, thus displayed, which finds expression in the burst of praise with which the Apostle finally closes his epistle, and speeds it on its way to make known to all nations that, whilst the '*obedience of works*' is impossible to all or any, the '*obedience of faith*' is impossible to none, but is the appointed and alone way of salvation for each and for all. Amen.

ADDENDUM.

BY NAME.

'*I know thee by name*' (Ex. xxxiii. 12).—'*I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name*' (Isaiah xlv. 3).—'*He calleth His own sheep by name*' (John x. 3.)

Feelings of interest and satisfaction are naturally excited by being members of a distinguished company.

An increased sense of satisfaction is experienced if one is singled out and addressed *by name* in the presence of others, or on seeing one's name *in print*.

These pleasurable feelings are enhanced, if there be good reasons for being singled out and distinguished.

And still more so if these reasons are stated, and made known to others.

Of the thirty-seven persons referred to *by their names* in the sixteenth chapter, twelve are mentioned by name only, without reference to any special reason for being thus singled out; in the case of each of the remaining twenty-five some special reason is given:—

One being referred to	as ' <i>a brother.</i> '
One	as ' <i>approved in Christ.</i> '
Three	as ' <i>beloved.</i> '
One	as ' <i>the chamberlain of the city.</i> '
Two	as ' <i>chosen in the Lord.</i> '
Two	as ' <i>fellow-prisoners.</i> '
One	as being ' <i>first fruits.</i> '
Three	as ' <i>helpers.</i> '
One	as ' <i>mine host.</i> '
Two	as ' <i>kinsmen.</i> '
Two	as ' <i>kinsmen and fellow labourers.</i> '
Three	as ' <i>labourers.</i> '
One	as ' <i>our sister a servant of the church.</i> '
One	as he ' <i>who wrote this epistle.</i> '
One	as my ' <i>work fellow.</i> '

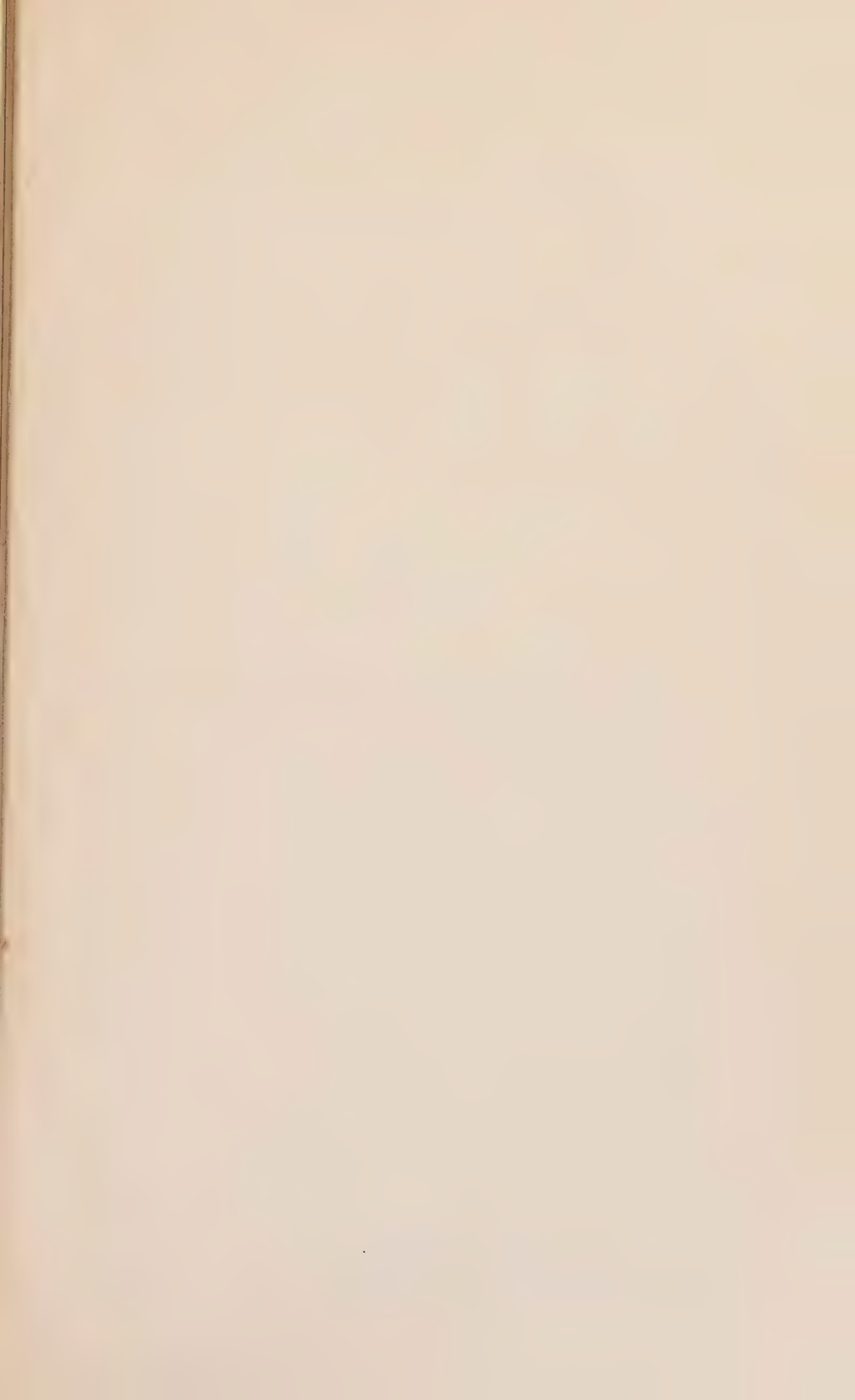
NAMES (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER) OF THOSE TO WHOM HE
SENT GREETING.

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| 1. Amplias, | <i>my beloved in the Lord.</i> |
| 2. Andronicus, | <i>my kinsman and fellow-prisoner.</i> |
| 3. Apelles, | <i>approved in Christ.</i> |
| 4. Aquila, | <i>my helper in Christ Jesus.</i> |
| 5. Aristobulus, | name only. |
| 6. Asyncritus, | name only. |
| 7. Epænetus, | <i>the first fruits of Achaia unto Christ.</i> |
| 8. Hermas, | name only. |
| 9. Hermes, | name only. |
| 10. Herodion, | <i>my kinsman.</i> |
| 11. Julia, | name only. |
| 12. Junia, | <i>my kinsman and fellow-prisoner.</i> |
| 13. Mary, | <i>who bestowed much labour on us.</i> |
| 14. Narcissus, | name only. |
| 15. Nereus, | name only. |
| 16. Nereus' sister, | name only. |
| 17. Olympas, | name only. |
| 18. Patrobas, | name only. |
| 19. Persis, | <i>the beloved which laboured much.</i> |
| 20. Philologus, | name only. |
| 21. Phlegon, | name only. |
| 22. Phebe, | <i>our sister and servant of the church.</i> |
| 23. Priscilla, | <i>my helper in Christ Jesus.</i> |
| 24. Rufus, | <i>chosen in the Lord.</i> |
| 25. Rufus' mother, | <i>chosen in the Lord.</i> |
| 26. Stachys, | <i>my beloved.</i> |
| 27. Tryphena, | <i>labourer in the Lord.</i> |
| 28. Tryphosa, | <i>labourer in the Lord.</i> |
| 29. Urbane, | <i>our helper in Christ.</i> |

NAMES (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER) OF THOSE WHO UNITED^s
WITH HIM IN SENDING GREETING.

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Erastus, | <i>the chamberlain of the city.</i> |
| 2. Gaius, | <i>mine host.</i> |
| 3. Jason, | <i>my kinsman.</i> |
| 4. Lucius, | <i>my kinsman.</i> |
| 5. Quartus, | <i>a brother.</i> |
| 6. Sosipater, | <i>my kinsman.</i> |
| 7. Tertius, | <i>who wrote this epistle.</i> |
| 8. Timotheus, | <i>my workfellow.</i> |





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